ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF Hindu Gods and Goddesses

SURESH CHANDRA



An authentic and outstanding work on "Encyclopaedia of Hindu Gods and Goddesses" compiled and edited and arranged in alphabetical order by a keen scholar of Hinduism. On the one hand, Hinduism regards god as a superfluity while on the other it sponsors a deeply emotional theism as the noblest form of religion. The true glory of Hinduism consists in presenting all these gods and goddesses with their life, doctorines and philosophy. Strictly speaking, Hinduism as a religion must be distinguished from Hinduism as a social organisation. This encyclopaedia includes life and teaching of renowned Hindu gods and goddesses. This encyclopaedia aims to provide material in lucid and readable form enabling students, researcher and the lay alike for an understanding and dissemination of the subject in proper perspectives. This renews our acquaintance with literature which we have neglected or forgotton. This is the ultimate purpose of author's efforts and he wishes and pray that this is fulfilled. This encyclopaedia is for the benefit of the students, teachers and research scholars as well as laymen who wish to know the key aspects of Hindu gods and goddesses.

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Preface

An authentic and outstanding work on "Encyclopaedia of Hindu Gods and Goddesses" compiled and edited and arranged in alphabetical order by a keen scholar of Hinduism. On the one hand, Hinduism regards god as a superfluity while on the other it sponsors a deeply emotional theism as the noblest form of religion. The true glory of Hinduism consists in presenting all these gods and goddesses with their life, doctorines and philosophy. Strictly speaking, Hinduism as a religion must be distinguished from Hinduism as a social organisation. This encyclopaedia includes life and teaching of renowned Hindu gods and goddesses. This encyclopaedia aims to provide material in lucid and readable form enabling students, researcher and the lay alike for an understanding and dissemination of the subject in proper perspectives. This renews our acquaintance with literature which we have neglected or forgotton. This is the ultimate purpose of my efforts and I wish and pray that this is fulfilled. This encyclopaedia is for the benefit of the students, teachers and research scholars as well as laymen who wish to know the key aspects of Hindu gods and goddesses.

A

Abhijit (*victorious*)

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Puranic). A benevolent naksatra or astral deity; daughter of Daksa and consort of Candra (Soma).

Abhijneraja

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted amongst a series of *sMan-bla* (medicine *buddhas*). Typiclly depicted with stretched ear-lobes. Colour: red.

Abhimukhi (*friendly disposed*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of twelve deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual shperes through which a disciple passes. Colour: yellow. Attributes: book and staff.

Acala (*immovable*)

1. Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of twelve deified bhumis recognized as different spirtual spheres through which a disciple passes. colour: white. Attributes: staff on lotus.

2. Tutelary god. Buddhist (Mahayana). Also a *dikpala* or guardian of the north-eastern quarter. Colour: blue. Attributes: jewel, lotus, staff and sword.

Acchupta (untouched)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Adhimukticarya

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of twelve defied

bhumis recognized as different spiritual sphers through which a disciple passes. Colour; red Attributes: red lotus and staff.

Adhimuktivasita (*control of confidence*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve vasitas or goddesses personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: white. Attribute: flower bud.

Adibuddha (*the primeval buddha*)

The original *buddha*. Buddhist. The primordial force in the cosmos from whom the five *dhyanibuddhas* arose. the embodiment of the cosmos from whom the five dhyanibuddhas arose. The embodiment of the concept of emptiness. He is considered by some authorities to be identical with Vajaraja and Vajrasattva. His image, sitting on a lotus leaf, is often carried by other Buddhist deities. Epithets include Svabhava (self-creating). Svayambhu (self-enlightened).

Adidharma (*the primeval low*)

Primordial goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Particularly worshipped in Lamaism, she is the *Sakti* of Adibuddha. Attributes: cup and knife.

Adimurti (*the primeval personification*)

Form or *avatara* of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Probably very similar to Narayana. Conventionally perceived as Visnu seated on the coils of the serpent.

Adi Sankar

Adi Sankaracharya is the founder of the *Advaita* philosophy. He was a saint with Christlike powers, but still he is well known for his philosophical approach of interpreting Vedas. He was a very versatile genius who made his mark on every aspect of Hinduism. He performed his mother's funeral rites and also composed several poems and prayers worshipping gods and goddesses. Still he spoke of *Brahman* alone. Swami Chinmayananda often says: *Sankara starts where Einstein ends*. Such was the knowledge of Sankaracharya.

He was born at Kaladi, about six miles from Alwaye, in the State of Kerala. By the age of eight, he had mastered all four Vedas and by the age of twelve he was well versed with all Hindu scriptures. By the age of 16, he had completed writing many important books and at the age of 32, he departed from the world.

According to western historians, Sankaracharya lived between 788 to 820 A.D. It is said that when he was 8 years old he went to North India and became a disciple of Govinda Bhagavadpada, who was a disciple of Gaudapada. Later Sankara went to Banaras and there Padmapada, Hastamalaka and Totaka became his disciples. According to some, the last days of Sankara were spent in Kanchi, where he departed from his body. According to some Sankara never died. He just departed from sight. Sativates believe that Sankaracharya is an avatar of Lord Siva.

During his short sojourn on earth, Sankaracharya wrote many books. He wrote commentaries on the Bhagaved Gita, Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Vishnu Sahasranama. He wrote two independent manuals namely *Upadesasahasri* and *Vivekachoodamani.* He also wrote Atma Bodham and *Bhaja Govindam.* Of all the devotional poems he wrote *Saundarya Lahari* is the best.

He also established four monasteries in different corners of India which are known as Sankaramaths. They are Sringeri (Mysore), Badrinath (Himalayas), dwaraka (Gujarat), and Puri (Orissa).

Just like Jesus Christ, Sankara came not to destroy but to fulfil the spiritual vacuum in India, during a particular period in Indian history. Sankaracharya stopped the onslaught of Buddhism on Hindu ideals and restored Hinduism to its past glory. According to him, "The Brahman alone exists; All the rest is *Maya* or illusion. The individual soul (*Jeevatman*) is Brahman alone and nothing else. People are bound by endless cycles of reincarnations due to ignorance. Ignorance is the root cause of all problems. Knowledge eradicates and delivers one from bondage."

Sankara also said: "The difference between God and Man is a matter of degrees. Ultimately they are one and the same being. *That*

which is within the Man is called *Atman* and *That* which embraces the universe is known as *Brahman*. They are one and the same; like the space inside the cup and the space outside the cup are one and the same.

Just like the *Tao* of the *Taoism*, Sankara's *Brahman* has no qualities, no parts, no consciousness and is timeless. If you read the writings of Adi Sankara about Brahman and the writings of Lao-Tse on *Tao*, both sound similar.

Hinduism owes quite a lot to Sankaracharya. His teachings are the true personification of the absolute freedom and his teachings are not limited to any particular group in Hinduism. You should try to read and study all his books in you like-time.

Both *Maha Bhagavatam* and the Bhagavad Gita state about the instrumentality of creation. The Srimad *Mahabhagavatam* states that it is a *Leela* (divine play) for God tocreate things. Bhagavad Gita on other hand states that it is part of the *Nature to create and procreate*. Aurbinod, the mystic of modern India (1872-1950) states that Sankara failed to explain why the *Absolute* descended into the finite. Unluckily, no cripture clearly answers this question. In Genesis, we see an Instrumentality of creation, where *Elohim* transformed into *Jehova* (I am) and created the universe in 6 days. In *Vedanta Sutra* (2.1.32-33) the word Leela — *the Divine Sport*-is used to explair *Creation as the desire-less expression of God...* Why God *wants to express itself*? I don't think we will ever have an answer to your question from anybody on earth, with human capabilities. Sankara himself states that the question like the one you have raised has no basis, since this material universe is indeed an illusion or *Maya*, just figments of imagination. You and I have problems, since we are not able to transcend this great veil of illusion or *Maya*.

Sankara never said that the world is not important. He only pointed out the fact that the world we see is not important. He only pointed out the fact that the world we see is not the real world. The world we see is a constantly changing world. Sitting in your car, one mile away, the water you saw on the road was *momentarily real*, but when you came close that water you saw became a 'mirage'.

The 'dream burglar' who is attacking you in the dream is real in the dream. You put up a 'dream fight' with him. But when you wake up, you will say to yourself, "It was only a dream."

Sankara says a man will state similarly about the world, the moment he realizes *True Knowledge.*

Whatever may be the criticism on the finer aspects of Sankara's *Advaita.* I personally feel *Advaita Philosophy will stay for ever. Tomorrow, if a human being is manufactured, within a lab, without the donations from a male* (*sperm*) *and a female* (egg), *most organized religions in the world will fall... But Sankara's Advaita Philosophy alone will be standing tall that day. It Sankara can resurrect or reincarnate then, he may shout: God creates illusion* but *now man started doing that himself...*That day only Advaita philosophy can be jubilant all the rest will crumble.

This philosophy is the philosophy of duality propagated by the sage Madhava, who believed that devotion to God is extremely important. According to him, the world is real and there is a differencc between man and God. Reality to him was of two kinds, independent and dependent. God is the only independent reality. Matter and self are dependent on the controlled by god. Self is active and is responsible for its own release from countless reincarnations by devotion to God.

Sage *Ramanuja,* another great apostle of *Dvaita* philosophy, was born about 1050 A.D. He was a devotee of Lord Vishnu. He took a middle path between *Advaita* and *Dvaita philosophites.* Sage Ramanuja said that God is not an unqualified principle as Adi Sankaracharya said, but a very personal God, who can be loved and understood through devotion. He argued that Adi Sankara stands against devotion to God. But at the same time, *Ramanuja* believed in the traditional Vedanta position of oneness with the *Almighty—God.* He believed in the principle of *Jeevatman* (individual soul) and *Paramatman* (Absolute soul) and merging of *Jesvatman* in *Paramatman* for attaining salvation. Both Advaita and *Dvaita* philosophies prevail in India with equal importance even today.

As I said earlier, it is normal to be confused sometimes about these philosophies. In fact, *both philosophies are one and the same but they differ only according to the level from which we look at them.* If I look at you and a robot as "Electrons and Protons", then both are one and the same. But looking at another level, the human being is very much different from any inanimate robot. Both are truths, but they differ in the level of perception. "A model's face is very pretty to the naked eye, but it is ugly under a powerful electron microscope. When the level of perception changes the truth derived also changes accordingly."

Look at the visible light. Sir Issac Newton said: *Light travels in straight lines.* Albert Einstein, with his Quantum Theory, proclaimed to the world: *Light moves in wave pattern.* Now we study both Nowton's and Einstein theories of light and use them both in the development of science. On one side *light* is a *continuous wave in motion* and whereas on other side the same light is independent particles in motion and still examining further, it is an electromagnetic radiation in the wavelength range *including in frared,* visible, and *ultriviolet rays with a speed* of approcimately 300 million meters per second when it travels *in a vacuum.*

Without duality perception action is impossible... We can perceive world only because it is a series of contrasting dualities. Man can act only in a *Subjective-Objective environment.* According to *Taoism,* the *Absolute one becomes two in creation.* The renowed Chinese *I Ching,* or the Book of Changes sees the universe as *Yin & Yang or Male* and *Female.* The *Yin* is the physical and emotional force and *Yang* is the intelligence and the spiritual force. They are indeed the two aspects of one Absolute Power, just like *North and South* poles of a magnet. Taoists try to attain a proper balance between the *Yin & Yang.*

It is said that the earliest champion of the famous binary system, the German genius Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, in 1966, laid down the foundation for the modern electronic computer, based on the ideas he received from *I Ching on Yin & Yang.*

According to him: *One represents God; zero represents void; from one and zero everything came just like one and zero can explain all*

mathematical ideas. So within the integrated circuits of the modern computer, one can come across Advaita and Dvaita systems. By keeping the microscopic electronic switches in a modern computer's central processor in *On* or *Off* positions, representing *One* and *Zero,* man has indeed created a dream world.

...All the complex problems of the world, an electronic computer sees only as *Zero* and *One* of switches. It may sound mind-boggling, but it is indeed the Truth. I hope from the above examples, it is very easy to understand why *Advaita* and *Dvaita* philosophies are equally important to Hindus. Again there are no airtight divisions between both philosophies. Adi Sankaracharya himself had written several devotional poems to different forms of God. Just like *Taoism,* Adi Sankara did not reject the material world or ordinary life, but asked his devotees to use them to transcend the material world. The doctrine of *Maya* or illusion, on which Sankara wrote volumes, does not state that *The world is unreal* but *our perception of the world is wrong.* Our perception of the world is a relutive perception, subject to *Time, Space* and *Causation.* The word *Maya* is usually explained by Hindu saints as *Negation* and "so let us stop all actions." That explanation is far from truth and it is against all the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita. The word *Illusion* came. So we cannot stop acting, until action naturally *Stops* in our life or *we see inaction in action* and *action in inaction* as expounded by the Gita.

To some the *Advaita* philosophy will appeal and to others *Dvaita* philosophy will appeal according to their individual nature. Personally, I feel both philosophies are part and parcel of a great philosophy, like *North* and *South* poles are part of one magnet. Two philosophies like these helped Hinduism to really explore into the unknown realms of our lives in general. It you see Advaita and Dvaita philosophies as two different philosophies, then Advaita is the Absoute Truth.

But when we live in a world of subjective-objective relationship, we are forced to act upon Dvaita principle. Even Sankara himself did not rule out *Dvaita* principle altogether in his famous "*Rope & Snake*" example. The man who sees the rope as a snake in

darkness was forced to undergo the mental stress of facing a snake face to face. Later when he found out the snake was actually a rope, he might have thought about his stupidity. Nobody can blame the man for seeing the rope as snake in darkness.

A man experiencing a dream sees a tiger chasing him. In his dream he tries to get away from the tiger. Without even moving an inch in his bed, he feels he ran miles and miles through the thorny forest, but when he suddenly gets up, he looks and says to himself, If *was only a dream.* The agonizing experience he had in his dream suddenly became a mere stupidity, when he woke up. According to Adi Sankara, we will feel the same way about this materialistic world, when we *wake up* from *this materialistic dream.*

At the same time *all of us have to fight in this world of duality, as long as we are seeing this world as dualistic in nature. Shouting or screaming about Advaita will not make one realize oneness with this universe.* But at the same time, along with Sankara, many masters have stated their capability to see the world as Advaita — one entity. Sufi saints are perfect examples. *If you search, finally you will reach that state of Sufis and Adi Sankara.*

Aditi (*the free one*)

Archaic mother goddess. Hindu (Vedic). According to the *Rg Veda* Aditi is said to be the wife of Kasyapa or of Brahma and mother of the *Adityas,* a group of minor gods including Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksa and Anisa. No other consort is mentioned in the literature. She is also accounted as the mother of Hari. Other legends account her as the mother of the rain god Indra. No human physical features are drawn, though she is sometimes identified in the guise of a cow. Aditi is also perceived as a guardian goddess who brings prosperity and who can free her devotees from problems and clear away obstacles. She disappears largely from later Hindu traditions.

Aditya (*descendant of Aditi*)

Collective name for sun gods. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). These numbered six in Vedic times but later increased to twelve. The sons of the primordial goddess Aditi. Also an epither for Surya.

Attributes: two or more lotuses.

Agni (fire)

Origin Hindu [India]. God of fire. *Known period of worship* circa 1500 BC onwards and still recognized.

Synonyms none.

Centre (s) of cult known throughout areas of Hindu influence.

Art references sculptures and reliefs in metal and stone.

Literary sources Rg Veda and other texts.

God of the sacrificial fire and the intercessor between gods and mankind, Agni is the son of Kasyapa and Aditi or, alternatively, of Dyaus and Prthivi. His consort is Svaha and, according to some texts, he is the father of the god Skanda. In a destructive capacity he is seen as an aspect of the god Siva. He is also a guardian or *dikpala* of the south-eastern quarter. In ancient hymns he is said to have been born in wood as the embryo life force of all trees and plants and he emerges when wood is rubbed together. Vehicles: a she-goat, or a chariot drawn by red horses or parrots. Colour: red.

Attributes: seven arms and sometimes the head of a goat, carrying a wide variety of objects.



AGNI, GOD OF FIRE

Agni (Fire) is one of those very few gods who have retained their supremacy in the Hindu heirarchy of gods completely, unimpaired right from the Vedio age till today. Agni is one of the three supreme deities of Rig Veda, namely Agni, Vayu and Surya. These three gods preside over earth, air and sky respectively.

In Rig Veda the largest number of hymns are addressed to Agni. Agni, as per scriptures, has seven tongues, each of which has a separate name and in being used for licking up butter offered in sacrifices.

Agni, God of Fire

Agni is the son of Angiras and the grandson of Sandila, one of the seven great sages. In the Mahabharat comes an interesting episode. Agni is there said to have exhausted his vigour by devouring too many oblations and therefore desires to consume the whole Khandav forest so as to regain its strength. He is prevented by Indra but eventually with the help of Krishna Agni consumes this forest.

Vishnu Puran on the other hand says that Agni is the eldest son a Brahma. His wife is Swaha and through this marriage he has three sons—Pavak, Pavman and Suchi—and through them he has forty six grandsons. Thus Agni has forty-nine members as his descendants. In Hari Vans Agni is clothed in black and has smoke as his standard and carries a flaming javelin. He has four hands and rides in a chariot drawn by red horses.

Agni Puran is said to have been recited by Agni himself to sage Vashist. It has portions on ritualistic and myctic methods of worship, the art of wars, the laws of Hindus and the glorification of Shiv.

Agnikumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of *bhvanavasi* (dwelling in places). They have a youthful appearance and are associated with rain and thunder.

"aham Brahmasmi" and Other Mantras

The actual meaning of "Aham Brahmasmi" is "I am Brahman, the

Spirit". Of course, anyone can say that line very easily with his tongue, but only God-realized masters experience it. All of us, even though we are *Pure Spirit* or energy, still find it difficult to fight the Illusion (Maya) which says "I am the body".

Anyway the idea expressed in the lines "Aham Brahmasmi" can be explained in another way. Look at a Dead Body and a Living Body. both are identical, but the Living Body has something that the Dead Body does not have. That which is missing in the Dead Body is the Spirit—Brahman, but at the same time, when Brahman is present in the body, it creates the greatest illusion that "I am the Body".

I will give you another example. Look at your computer. It does all kinds of wonders for you, but if you accidentally switch off the main circuitbreaker, your expensive computer is a dead machine. So here the electric current is the Brahman or Spirit. We know that Brahman or Spirit acts differently in different people or creatures according to their Karmas. Similarly, the same electric current is a *Thinker* in a computer, a heater in your electric iron and a cooler in your air-conditioner.

... IMPORTANT REVELATIONS OF HINDUISM...

FROM BRIHAD-ARYANYAKA UPANISHAD

AHAM BRAHMASMI - I am Brahma, the Infinite

AHAM EVA IDAM - am indeed THIS.

AYAM ATMA BRAHMA - This self (soul) is Brahma.

SARVOSMI - I am that is all.

NETI-NETI- "not this-not this" method to define Brahman.

PRAJNANAH BRAHMAN - Brahman is knowledge.

FROM CHANDOGYA-UPANISHAD

TAT TVAM SAI- That thou art—You the individual souf is indeed the supreme soul

SARVAM KHALU IDAM BRAHMA - Everything is Brahma.

EKAM EVADVITIYAM — One essence only.

FROM ISA UPANISHAD

YAS TVAM SAI SO 'HAM ASMI - You are indeed "I AM "
In old Testament JEHOVA means I AM

TYAKTENA BHUNJITHA - Enjoy by renunciation

SOHAM - I AM HE - THAT AM I

FROM MANDUKYA UPANISHAD

SANTAM SIVAM ADVAITAM - The Tranquil, the Bliss, the Undivided

FROM MUNDAKA UPANISHAD

BRAHMA EVA IDAM VISVAM - This whole world is Brahma

BRAHMAVID BRAHMAIVA BHAVATI - Realising Brahman, you indeed becomes Brahman.

SATYAM EVA JAYATI - Truth alone triumphs

IDAM SARVAM AST - Thou art all this.

"That Thou Art" is the meaning of the bove line. This statement is an indirect repetition of "Aham Brahmasmi" meaning "I am Brahman". As you can see both statements are one and the same. Brahman alone exists, everything else is illusion or Maya. "Tat Tvam Asi" is actually quoted from Chandogya Upanishad : *That subtle essence is the self of this entire world. That is reat, that is self. That Thou Art.*

Absolute Existence - Absolute Knowledge - Absolute Bliss. Saints usually use this statement to arouse in devotees spiritual feelings and to break away from material bondage.

The meaning of "Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram" is *Truth-Bliss-Beauty*. This statement again expresses the true nature of one who is one with Brahman. A God-realised person will experience Truth-Bliss Beauty all the time.

"Ham Aham Sah"is a mantra. It means "I am he, he is I". This Mantra came from the word Hamsa. Hamsa means a swan. It is a symbol of Brahman. Those who attained cosmic consciousness are often called a Paramahamsa—the greet swan.

This mantra is similar to the Hebrew word *Jehovah* (old testament)

which means "I am".

Airavat

Airavat, the king-god of elephants, is the mount of god Indra. This elephant emerged out of the waters when ocean was churned by the gods. That is why its name is derived from Iravat signifying one produced from water. Elephant is the mount of each one of the eight guardian deities who preside over the eight points of the compass.

The deities presiding over the four cardinal and four intermediate points of the compass are: (1) East-Indra; (2) South-east-Agni; (3) South - Yama; (8) South-west-Surya; (5) West-Varun; (6) North-west- Vayu; (7) Nurth-Kuver; (8) North-east - Soma. Now each of these deities has an elephant who takes part in the defence and protection of the allotted quarter. The chief among them is Airavat of Indra. He is also called Ardh-Matanga (elephant of the clouds), Arkasodara (brother of the sun), Naga-Malla (the fighting elephant). The name of the wife of elephant Airavat is Abharamu.

Airavat has four tusks and is spotles white; he was made King of all elephants by Prithu, accoding to Vishnu Puran. As per legend, Brahma held in his hands two halves of an egg-shell over which he read seven sacred hymns. From the right half portion of the egg eight elephants including Airavat emerged and from the left half eight cow-elephants. Another interesting myth says that initially all the elephants had wings, and they could fly in the skies. Once one of these flying elephants descended heavily on a tree under which a sage was performing his *puja* (worship-rituals). The branches of the tree broke and the sage felt much disturbed. He laid a curse upon all elephants that they should lose their wings. Notwithstanding this curse, they are still believed to be capable of producing clouds. Hence Indra, when seated on Airavat, sends rains on the earth.

The cult of the white elephants as sacred deities is widely practised in some other parts of Asia too, e.g., in Thailand and Burma.

Ajaya (*invincible*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of

Buddhakappala.

Akasagarbha (*essence of the sky*)

Astral god. Buddhist (Mahayana) and Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the *bodhisattvas* or spiritual meditation *buddhas*. He lives in the womb of the sky'. Colour: green. Attributes: book, jewel, lotus and sun disc. Also Khagarbha. In Japanese Buddhism this deity becomes the god Kokuzo.

Akasyajnana-Karmanda (*undecaying knowledge of Karma*)

Deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve dharanis. Colour: red. Attributes: basket with jewels, and staff.

Aksobhya (imperturbable)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The second *dhyanibudha* or meditation buddha. *Known period of worship* circa 500 BC to present.

Synonyms Vajrasana; Bajraheruka.

Centre (s) of cult pan-Asiatic.

Art references metal and stone sculptures, paintings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of five mystic spiritual counterparts of a human *buddha* in Vajrayana Buddhism. A product of the Adibuddha who represents the branch of the cosmos concerned with consciousness. He originates from the blue mantra HUM and lives in the eastern paradise Abhirati. His *Sakti* is Locana and he is normally accompanied by two elephants. Colour: blue. Attributes include bell, three monkish robes and staff, also jewel, lotus, prayer wheel and sword. Aksohya may also be a tutelary deity in Lamaism [Tibet] in which case his attributes are similar. Emanations inclued Heruka, Manjusri, Vajrapani and a large number of minor names. See also Amitabha.

Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava and Vairocana.

Amida

Primordial deity. Buddhist (Japanese). The Japanese equivalent of

Amitabha recognized from the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD.

Amitabha (*of unmeasured splendour*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The fourth *dhyanibuddha* or meditation *buddha*. *Known period of worship* circa 500 BC to present.

Synonyms Vajradharma and possibly Amitayaus.

Centre (s) of cult pan-Asiatic. *Art references* metal and stone sculptures, paintings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of five mystic spiritual counterparts of a human *buddha* in Vajrayana Buddhism. A product of the adibuddha who represents the branch of the cosmos concerned with consciousness. He originates from the red mantra HRIH and lives in the western paradise Sukhavati. The cult may have been influenced by Iranian light religions. His *Sakti* is Pandara and he is normally accompanied by two peacocks. Colour: red. Attributes: lock of hair, lotus, monk's robe and water jar. Amitabha is also taken as a tutelary god in Lamaism [Tibet] in which case his attributes include bell, jewel and three monkish robes. Emanations include Padmapani, Manjusri and many other minor names. See also Aksobhya, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava and Vairocana.

Amma

Local tutelary god. Dravidian (Tamil). Known from southern India.

Ammavaru

Primordial mother goddess. Hindu-Dravidian. Known locally from east-central India and worshipped by the Dravidian tribe of Telugu. She is said to have generated the cosmic egg in the sea of milk from which the major gods Brahma, Visnu and Siva were born.

Amoghapasa

God. Buddhist. A variety of Avalokitesvara, depicted with one head and six, eight or twenty hands. Attributes: arrow, bell, lotus, noose, prayer wheel, rosary, staff and tiger skin.

AMOGHASIDDHI (*unfailing power*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The fith *dhyanibuddha* or meditation *buddha. Known period of worship* circa 500 BC to present.

Synonyms Kharmaheruka. *Centre (s) of cult* pan-Asiatic. Art references metal and stone sculptures, paintings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of five mystic spiritual counterparts of a human *buddha* in Vajrayana Buddhism. A product of the Adibuddha who represents the branch of the cosmos concerned with consciousness. He originates from the green mantra HUM and lives in the northern paradise. His *Sakti* is Aryatara and he is normally accompanied by two Garudas or dwarfs. Colour: green. Attributes: staff and sometimes seven- headed snake. Amoghasiddhi is also taken as a tutelary deity in Lamaism [Tibet] in which case his attributes include bell, three monkish robes and prayer wheel. Emanations include Visvapani and many other minor names. See also Aksobhya. Amitabha. Ratnasambhava and Vairocana.

Anala (*fire*)

Attendant god. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of eight *vasu* deities answering to the god Indra.

Ananta

Snake god. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of seven snake deities or *mahanagas.*

Anantamukhi (*will the face of Ananta*)

Deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve *dharanis.* Colour: green. Attributes: staff and water jar with treasure.

Anantesa

Minor deity. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of eight emancipated 'lords of knowledge' or *vidyesvaras* considered to be aspects of Siva.

Anila (*wind*)

Attendant god. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of eight *vasu*

deities answering to the god Indra.

Ankalamman

Guardian goddess. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). Known particularly in southern India where she wards off demons. Altematively she is an aspect of Kali.

Annamurti

Form of the god Visnu. Hindu (Puranic). The patron deity of kitchens and food. A shrine at Srirangam in southern India contains two-armed bronze images of the god. Attributes: a ball of rice in one hand, and in the other a container of payasa (sweetened milk and rice).

Ansa

Minor sun god. Hindu (Puranic). One of six Aditya descendants of Aditi.

Anuradha

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra* or astral deity, daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Apa

Attendant god. Hundu (Puranic). One of a group of eight vasu deities answering to the god Indra. Attributes: book and plough.

Aparajita (*unconquered*)

1. God. Hindu (Puranic). One of the eleven ekadasarudras or forms of Rudra. Attributes: bell, bowl, club, drum, hook, lance, lotus, prayer wheel, rod, rosary, shield, sword and trident.

2. Minor god. Buddhist (Mahayana).

3. Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Form of Durga. Her attendant animal is a lion. Attributes: arrow, shield, snake and sword.

4. Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). She stands or treads on the god Ganesa. Colour: yellow. Attributes: bell, hook, image of Ratnasamhava, noose and staff.

Apsaras

Water spirits. Hindu (Vedic). Identified as musicians and protective deities of gamblers bringing good fortune. They may also bring insanify.

Aranyani

Minor goddess of woodlands. Hindu (Vedic). Possibly having evolved from a primitive animistic guardian spirit of animals, Aranyani is an elusive, rarely seen, deity who is recognized in the sounds of the trees, particularly at dusk. She is a benign figure, sweet-scented and unwilling to destroy unless severely provoked.

Arapacana

God. Buddhist. A *bodhisattva* or spiritual meditation *buddha.* Originally a *dharani* of Manjusri who became deified. Accompanied by four minor deities. Also a collective name for the five *buddhas.* Colour: yellow or red. Attributes: standing wearing a monkish garment and carrying book and sword.

Arcismati (*brilliant*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: green. Attributes: blue lotus and staff.

Ardhanari (svara) (*the lord being half woman*)

God. Hindu (Puranic). The god Siva combined with his Sakti as a single being. His attendant animal is the bull. In iconography the left side of the image is female and the right male. A tutelary deity of eunuchs in India. Attributes: (right side) blue lotus, cup, hatchet, lute, moon disc, pestle, skin, sword and trident; (left side) axe, mirror, noose, pitcher, rosary, sacred rope and trident. May appear as three-headed. Also Ammaiappan (Tamil); Naranari.

Ardra

Minor goddess of misfortune. Hindu (Puranic). A malevolent *nakastra* or astral deity; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Arjuna (*silvery*)

Heroic god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). Arjuna appears in the *Mahabharata epic*. One of the princely sons of the mythical Pandu family, his father is Indra. He generally appears with the warrior god Bhima. Allegedly responsible for requesting Visnu to take his Visvarupa form but also identified as a minor incarnation or *avatara* of Visnu. Attributes: usually depicted bearing a bow received from Agni the fire god, but may also appear carrying a sword and shield. Also Nara.

Arthapratisamvit

Goddess of logical analysis. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of a group of four. Colour: green Attributes: jewel and noose.

Arundhati (*faithfulness*)

Astral goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Personification of the morning star and the wife of all risis or inspired sons of Brahma though particularly associated with Vasistha. Attributes: begging bowls.

Aryaman (*companion*)

Minor sun god. Hindu (Vedic and puranic). In Vedic times, the god of formal hospitality. One of six *Aditya* sons of the goddess Aditi. Attributes: clud, two lotuses and prayer wheel.

Arya-Tara (*the honourable Tara*)

Goddess. Buddhist. The Sakti of Amoghasiddhi. Her name is often abbreviated to Tara and she originates from the TAM bija or seed. Colour: green. Attributes: green lotus and staff. Also

Ashrama Dharmas and Non-violence

Hinduim a man has to undergo four stages in his life. They are *Brahmacharya* or *Kaumaryam* (bachelor-student), *Garhasthyam* (married householder), *Vanaprastam* (hermit), *Sannyasam* (wandering renunciate). These four stages are collectively known as Ashramas. In each state the man is supposed to work hard for, attaining salvation. During the state of *Brahmacharya*, the celibate student receives instruction about scriptures and learns self-control and prepares himself for life's responsibilities. In the *Garhastya*

Ashrama the man gets married to a virgin girl from his caste and takes up a vocation. He leads a married householder's life as per the instructions of the *Dharma Sutras*. In *Vanaprasta Ashram*, a man prepares to renounce the world by living in jungles as a hermit. In *Sannyasa Ashrama* the man renounces worldly affairs completely, cutting himself away from the world and becoming a wandering saint.

The work or duties one has to do during each stage is known as Ashrama Dharma. All Ashrama Dharmas are laid down by the Dharma Sutra. In the *Gautama Smriti*, which is a part of the Dharma Sutras, there are 40 ceremonial rites in Garhastya Ashrama, but as per the *Grighya Sutras*, the total ceremonial rites in Garhastya Ashrama are sixteen. Ashrama Dharmas guide a man to the final goal - God-realization.

There is an oft-quoted Hindu saying, "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma" which means "Non-violence is the highest duty." Long before Jesus Christ, Hinduism taught people to return good for evil. Scores of passages from the Mahabharata and the Mahabhagavata can be quoted in support.

Ahimsa or non-violence is for those who are brave and strong. To flee from a bully and brute and to call it Non-violence is the worst form of self-deception. Non-violence actually teaches mastery of spiritual strength over brute strength. The spirit of non-biolence is prevalent among all religions. It is evident throughout the teachings of Christ and also in the lives of Sufi saints. True Ahimsa implies gentleness, courtesy, kindness, hospitality, humanity and love. Mahatma Gandhi is the greatest apostle of Ahimsa in modern times. He used Ahimsa effectively in his freedom fight against the British. Non-violence has two sides, as I said above. On the negative side, it means even running away from righteousness and duty for fear of afflicting pain on creatures. On the positive side it means perfect selfless love towards every creature. *Non-violence should never be used to cover up cowardice.*

Ashtanga Yoga and Laya Yoga

Ashtanga Yoga literally means 'the Yoga with eight limbs'. This is

the Yoga Patanjali explains in his book *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*. Of course this Yoga is none other than the Raja Yoga I explained before. The eight limbs of the Yoga are: 1. Yama consisting of Truthfulness, Non-stealing, celibacy and non-violence. 2. *Niyama* consisting of purity of mind, contentment, penance, study of scriptures and meditation on God. 3. *Asanas* (Postures). 4. *Pranayama* (control of Prana). 5. *Pratyahara* (withdrawal of sense organs from sense object). 7. *Dhyana* (meditation). 8. *Samadhi* (final state of realization).

The Yoga which concentrates on the awakening of the Kundalini power is known as *Laya Yoga*. Some call this Yoga by name *Kundalini Yoga*. This awakening of Kunadalini is achieved by meditation of Chakras in a proper order, under the guidance of a very competent Guru. It is said that premature awakening of Kunadalini is extremely dangerous and as such extreme caution is maintained about this Yoga in Hinduism. It is said that certain drugs are capable of sudden awakening of Kundalini power or Serpent Power, and that is the reason why Hinduism forbids use of drugs to help in meditation.

Aslesa (s) (*adherence*)

Minor goddess of misfortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A malevolent naksatra or astral deity; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Asokottamasri (*the great beauty of Asoka*)

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted amongst one of a series of medicine *buddhas* or *sMan-bla* in Lamaism. Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes. Colour: red.

Astamatara

Generic term for a group of mother goddesses. Hindu (Puranic). Eight deities who are varieties of the goddess Camunda, often malevolent.

Asurakumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of *bhvanavasi* (dwelling in places). They have a youthful appearance

and are associated with rain and thunder.

Asuras

Sky gods. Hindu (Vedic). Identified in the opening of the *Rg. Veda,* they become demonic in later Hinduism, the antagonists of the deva gods.

Asvins

Physician gods. Hindu (Vedic). Twin gods owning horses, the sons of Vivasvan and Saranyu. Depicted in a chariot drawn by horses or birds. Attributes: book, vessel with herbs and water jar.

Asvayujau (*harnessing horses*)

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra* or astral deity; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma), Also Asvini and Asvinyau.

Aticandika (*exceedingly great*)

Distinct form of the goddess Durga. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of nine deities, known as the 'nine durgas'.

Atomic School of Hinduism

According to Hindusm, matter is made of five elements. They are :

Prithvi ... Earth – (Solid)

Jala ... Water – (Liquid)

Tejas ... Fire – (Light)

Vayu ... Air – (Gas)

Akasha ... Ether – (Space)

These elements are popularly known as *Pancha bhutas* or *Pancha Tattvas.* There is something very strange about these elements. Look at the electronconfiguration of all elements beginning with the first element – solid - and ending with *Akasha* or space. You will see a gradual increase of free electrons in the atomic structure of elements. No one can say whether it was a strange coincidence or whether the Hindu saints did know something about the

variation of free electrons in the atomic structure of these elements. According to Hinduism, at the time of Pralaya (big floods or deluge), the manifested universe will break down into its elements and it will stay in that state until another universe is born and life begins again.

Aum — The Word or Sound

The sacred syllable Aum (Om) stands for the Absolute. It is uttered at the beginning and the end of most Hindu prayers. It is considered as the very essence of the Vedas, Some say that 'A' represents the Waking State, 'U' represents the Sleep State (Nidra), 'M' represents the Deep-Sleep State (Sushupti) and the combination Aum represents Total consciousness. The Katha Upanishad says, "The word which all the Vedas and all austerities declare, and desiring which men lead a life of chastity – That word I will tell you briefly. This syllable is indeed Brahman; this syllable is indeed the Supreme."

The Mandukya Upanishad says, "Aum – This syllable stands for the whole world." The past, the present, the future, everything is just the syllable Aum. Even threefold time too is just Aum."

Sage Patanjali who wrote the *Yoga Sutra* speaks of God as "*Aum*". he wrote, "Meditate on *Aum* (Om) to actually contact Ishwara (God). *Aum* is His symbol." In the Christian Bible, *Aum* is mentioned as the Word. I"In the beginning there was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." The word Aum, Christian *Amen* and Mohammedan *Amin* all represent one and the same. In the Upanishads, *Aum* has been described as *Pranava.*

So much is written about *Aum* in all scriptures of Hinduism. Many people think that they can simply chant *Aum* with their tuman voices. The fact of the matter is that since the *Aum* sound has a very high or very low rate of vibration, it cannot be uttered by the human voice. Of course, there is nothing wrong in trying to chant the word Aum with your human voice. The right way of chanting *Aum* is mental chanting and superconscious chanting. *Aum* should be chanted with proper *Pratyahara* (interiorization of the attention) and *Paranayama* (life-force control and proper withdrawing of

senses from sense objects.) It is said that he who knows God as the cosmic sound finds himself free of all miseries and death.

Avalokitesvara (*merciful lord*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. *Bodhisattva* or buddha-designate.

Known period of worship circa 500 BC to present.

Symonyms nineteen other forms listed.

Centre (s) of cult pan-Asiatic.

Art references metal and stone sculptures, painitings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of the most important deities of the Mahayana sect of Buddhism. In Lamaism he is the tutelary god of Tibet. He equates with Visnu in Hinduism and bears links with Padmapani. In cosmic mythology he is a creator deity. His *Sakti* is Pandara and his attendant animal is a lion. Many forms of Avalokitesvara exist which may include varieties with up to eleven heads, sometimes arranged in a pyramid. Colour: white or red. Attributes: blue lotus, image of Amitabha (topmost pyramidal head), lotus, rosary, sword and water jar.

NOTE in Chinese Buddhism he is represented by the goddess Kuan- Tin, and in Japanese by Kwannon.

Avatars

An Avater is an incarnation of God. When God comes down to earth in any life-form, then we call that an Avatar.

In the Bhagavad Gita it is written, "Whenever there is a decay of Dharma (*righteousuess*) and outbreak of adharma (*non-righteousness*), I descend myself to protect good, to annihilate the wicked and to re-establish dharma (*righteousness*). I am born from age to age. (Gita Chapter 4-7, 8).

Avatars of Lord Vishnu

The ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu are: Matsya (*fish*), Kurma (*tortoise*), Varaha (boar), Narasimaha (*man-lion*), Vamana

(*dwarf*), Parasurama (*the warrior with an axe*), Rama, Krishan, Buddha, and Kalki (*the man on the white horse*). All these Avatars are very important to the Vaishnava movement in India. The Kalki Avatar is yet to come. Hindus believe that the Kalki Avatar will come at the time of *Pralaya,* the great deluge.

Each Avatar has a definite purpose. Lord Vishnu came as *Matsya* (*fish*) to save Sage Manu (Vaivasvata — the seventh Manu) from the floods and recover Vedas from a demon's hands. After that episode, things were still in a disarray and Devas (gods of heaven) discovered that divine nectar of immortality had been lost and it was at the bottom of the sea. Lord Vishnu helped in its recovery by becoming *Kurma* (tortoise).

Lord Vishnu took the Avatar of *Varaha* (boar) to kill a demon named Hiranaksha, who dragged the earth to the bottom of the

ocean. Lord Vishnu,, after dilling the demon brought earth back from the bottom of the ocean. After the death of Hinanyaksha, his twin-brother Hiranyakasipu became the king of the demons. He made everyone treat him as God. Since *Hiranyakasipu* had received a boon from Lord Brahma that he could not be killed by either a man or an animal, Lord Vishnu took the form of Narasimha (man-lion) and killed him. Lord Vishnu came as Vamana (dwarf) to get rid of the demon-king *Mahabali.* Unlike anyother demon king, *Mahabali* was a very great king. According to mythology, during the reign of *Mahabali,* the world was like heaven and everyone was praising him in all the three worlds. Lord Vishnu as Vamana (dwarf) tricked *Mahabali* to promise him (*Vamana*) that area of land which he could cover in three steps. *Mahabali* agreed. The Vamana then immediately became a giant and took two steps to cover all the three worlds. He did not have a place to put his third step, so poor *Mahabali's*) head. Then *Vamana* pushed *Mahabali* to the third world known as Patala. People in the Kerala State of India still celebrate the reign of *Mahabali* by a celebration named *Onam.*

Lord Vishnu came as Parasurama (the warrior with an axe) to save the Brahmin caste from the tyranny of *Kshatriyas.* Then he came down as Rama to annihilate Ravana, the demon-king of Sri Lanka.

We read the story of Rama at length in the Ramayana epic. The incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Krishna is the most popular Avatar of all. Even though Hindus consider Buddha as an Avatar, except for an idol of Buddha in every temple, Hindus seldom worship Buddha. To some extent, Hindus attitude to Buddha is similar to the attitude of Jews to Jesus Christ.

Kalki (the man on the white horse), as I said before, is an Avatar yet to come to restore earth's purity. You should read *Srimad Bhagavatam* to get all details.

Of course the ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu which I described to you at length are the principal Avatars of Lord Vishnu. According to Bhagavata Purana, there are 22 incarnations of Lord Vishnu. They consist of the ten incarnations I have already described to you and 12 more incarnations as tiollows : 1. Sanat Kumara (youth) 2. Sage Narada (exponent of Bhakti and Tantras) 3. Saints Nara and Narayana 4. Sage Kapila (Founder of Samkhya System) 5. Dattatreya (the great magician who restored Vedic rites and the originator of Tantric rites) 6. Yajna (Lord Vshnu is identified as the sacrifice) 7. Rishabha (founder of the pre-aryan Jain Philosophy) 8. King Prithu 9. Dhanvatari (founder of Ayurveda—he came from the ocean of milk holding the divine elixir Amruth) 10. Balarama (came as the brother of Lord Krishna—he is an embodiment of virtues) 11. Sage Veda Vyasa (Author of Mahabharata and Bhagavata Purana) 12. Mohini (the enchantress who deprived the demons of the divine elixir Amruth).

There are still more Avatars of Lord Vishnu which are not mentioned in the list above. For example. one upon a time, Lord Vishnu happened to lose his head by an accident and he became horse headed and known as Hayasirsa (horse-headed). As horse-headed, Lord Vishnu went and Killed two demons Madhu and Kaitabha and rescued the Vedas from them.

Ayiyanayaka

Plague god. Singhalese [Sri Lanka]. A deity of fields and woodlands who is still revered as a guardian of crops and a protector against plague.

Ayurvasita (*control of life*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve *vasitas* or goddesses personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. colour: whitish red. Attributes: image of Amidabudha and jewel.

Ayyappan Local god of growth. Hindu. Particularly recognized in the Karala region.

Ayurveda and Jyotisha

Ayurveda is one of the Upavedas. The four popular Upavedas are *Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda* and *Arthashastra.* Ayurveda has its roots in the Atharva Veda. It is said that the original text of Ayurveda, composed by Lord Brahma himself, contained 100,000 verses spread over 1,000 chapters and it was composed long before the creation of beings (*Susrutasamhita* 1.1.5). Since, Atharva Veda only contains 6,000 verses, some calls Ayurveda as the Fifth Veda.

The literal meaning of Ayurveda is medicine. The gods of healing are Prajapati, Brahaspati, Indra. Dhanvanthari etc. The most important figures of Ayurveda are *Charvaka* (80-180 A.D.), *Susruta* (350 A.D.), *Vagbhatta* (610-850 A.D.), *Bridhabala* (880 A.D.), *Madhava* (1370 A.D.,).

In Hinduism, the word *Jyotisha* means both astrology and astronomy. Both were part of the group known as *Vedangas.* Hundu astronomy benefited very much from the influence of Greek astronomy. The earliest Hindu treatises on Astronomy is known as *Siddhantas. Aryabhata* (476-520 A.D.), the Hindu Mathematician, is the first who tried to explain the actual cause of eclipses. Another great Hindu Astronomer was Varahamihira (505-587 A.D.).

Hindus are always fascinated by astrology. As per legends, the sage *Bhrighu* had written astrological charts giving the horoscope of every person ever born or to be born in this world. The writings of Bhrighus is popularly known as *Bhrighu Samhita* and it is available with few astrologers of India. Other greate treatises in *Astrology* are known as *Sathya Samhita, Narada Samhita* and *Saptarist Nadi. Saptarist Nadi* consists of 12 books and it was printed in Tamil

language. Bhrighu Samhita consists of 4 books and about 10,000 pages. The Hindu god of Astrology is Lord Subramanyan, the son of Lord Siva. Some say that once upon a time, astrology was a very well developed science, but today's astrology is only a skeleton, with most of the valuable knowledge lost due to the practice of utmost secrect by the learned men of Hindu society.

If Moon can affect the tides in the sea, who cant stars affect the tides in the life of a man? *Nostradamus* (1503-1566), the French Astrologer and physician, had indeed predicted many incidents in the world history, like the execution of King Charles IX, rise and fall of Napoleon and Adolf Hitler and even the assassination of President Kennedy. Some of these could be strange coincidences and some of them could be explained by the 'theory of probability.' However, I will not rule out *Astrology* as a 'false-science.' Without fanatical arguing for or against Astrology, we have to research further about it.

Ayyappan

Local god of growth. Hindu. Particularly recognized in the Kerala region.

B

Badi Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu [northern Indian]. A Sakti and one of the seven *saptamataras* (mothers) who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent, attacking chidren during puberty. Particularly recognized in Bengal.

Bagala (*power of cruelty*)

Goddess. Hindu. One of a group of ten mahavidyas personifying the *Sakti of Siva.* Aspects include Viraratri.

Bala

1. Mother goddess Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Of vague affanity but generally of youthul appearnce. Seated upon a lotus throne book and rosary.

2. Messenger godcess. Jain [India]. One of the twency focr sastnadevatas.

Balakrsna

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Krsna in child form (see Kurma).

Balarama (*strength of Rama*)

Incarnation of the god Visnu, Hindu (Epic and Puranic). May have originated in Vedic times as an agricultural fertility deity. He is the son of Vasudeva and Devaki, though born from the womb of Rohini. Jointly with Krsna (his brother), he is identified as the eighth *avatara* (incarnation) of Visnu, or, with Rama, a the seventh. Legend describes how Visnu impregnated the belly of the

goddess Devaki with two hairs, one black, one white. To ensure their safety against a demon king, they were transferred before birth to Rohini. Kisna grew to be dark-skinned, and Balarama light. The latter enjoys similar characteristics to Krsna but fails to attract the same popularity. He is usually depicted on the right side of Krsna, rarely standing alone. The consort of Balarama is Revati and his sons are Nisatha and Ulmuka. Epithets included Ananda (joy). In Jainism he is known as Baladeva. Attributes: arrow, club, drinking cup, fan palm, honey pot, lotus, pestle, pitcher, plough, prayer wheel, shield and sword.

Bala-Sakti

Goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. Youthful deity who presides over six *cakras* or prayer wheels. Often accompanied by a geometric magical diagram or *yantra.* Attributes: book, hook, noose and rosary.

Bali

Demonic god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The son of Virocana, his power was removed by Visnu in his *avatara* of Vamana.

Beg-Tse (*concealed coat of mail*)

God of war. Buddhist and Lamaist (Tibet]. One of a *group* of eight *dharmapala* with terrible appearance and royal attire. Stands with one foot on a horse and one on a man. Colour: red Attributes: banner, fire, skin and sword. May appear with three eyes. Also Cam-srin.

Bella Pennu

Sun god. Indian (Khond). A local deity in the Orissa province synonymous with Boora Pennu.

Benaras - Holy City of Hindus

A large number of cities in India are holy cities to Hindus and among them Benaras is the most sacred and most popular. It stands on the banks of the Ganges between Delhi and Calcutta. The ancient name of the city is Kasi, the luminous city of lights. The Sanskrit and Hindi name of the city is Varanasi. A 36-mile road

circles the most sacred parts of the city. Benaras has thousands of temples, of which the Kashi Vishwanatha temple is the most famous. The most importan part of a pilgrimage to Benaras consists in taking a bath in the holy waters of the Ganges. Along the river there are at least 70 bathing ghats (landings or banks). It is said that taking a bath in the Ganga at Benaras washes away all sins.

Benaras is the oldest living city in the world. It attracts people from all over the five continents. It is said that saints and prophets like the Buddha, Mahavira and Sankara had gone to Benaras to worship and teach. Benaras is said to be the city of Lord Siva, the God of annihilation. So it is especially sacred to followers of Lord Siva.

After visiting Benaras, Mark Twain said: "Bendras is older than history, older than tradition, older than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together."

Bera Pennu

Vegetation goddess. Northern Indian. Worshipped by the Khonds in Bengal. She was the recipient of human sacrifice to ensure good harvest, particularly of the spice turmeric, and as a protection against disease and infirmity. The sacrificial victim or meriah was youthful, often kept for years as a holy person before death and was always either the offspring of a previous sacirificial victim, or purchased from improverished families for the purpose. He or she was generally strangled, sometimes in the fork of a tree, after days of festivities. In other instances the victim was cut up alive.

Bhadra (*auspicious*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Attendant of Siva. Generally seated. Attributes: blue lotus, fruit, rosary and trident.

Bhaga (*the dispenser of fortune*)

Minor sun god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). In Vedic times, the incarnation of women's good fortune in marriage. One of six *Adityas*, sons of the goddess Aditi. Consort: Siddhi. Attributes: two lotuses, prayer wheel and trident.

Bhagavan (*the lord*)

Tutelary god. Northern and central Indian. Worshipped by the Bhils and other tribes as the original creator spirit and a judge of the dead soul. Also an epithet of Visnu and Krsna. Also Bhagwan.

Bhagvad Gita

The majority of Hindus consider the Bhagavad Gita as the Hindu Holy Bible. It is said in one of the Hindu sciptures, if the Upanishads can be considered as cows, the Bhagavad Gita can be considered as milk. Truly, the Bhagavad Gita is the essence of the Vedas. It is indeed a summation of the Upanishads. The Gita is in the form of a conversation between the warrior-prince Arjuna and his charioteer and friend Lord Krishna at the outset of the Mahabharata War. Just before the beginning of the fight, Arjuna refused to fight, when he saw that he had to hill his own kinsmen. Krishna advised him in detail on a variety of subjects. At the end, Arjuna took Lord Krishna's advice and fought a very fierce war.

The Bhagavad Gita consists of 18 chapters and about 700 verses. It details in depth with all Yogas or ways of God-realization. There are so many versions of the Bhagavad Gita available in the market. The very first English translation was done by Charles Wilkins in 1785, with an ntroduction by Warren Hastings, the first British Governor General of India. But the most popular English translation was done by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title. "The Song Celestial."

The Gita has an answer to every problem a man may face in his life. The Bhagavad Gita never commands one what to do, instead it gives the *Pros* and *cons* of every issue and final decision is left to oneself. Throughout the Bhagavad Gita, you will not come across even one line starting with *Thou shalt not.* When Christian scriptures are talking about Permanent Hell to Sinners, the Bhagavad Gita proclaim Salvation for all in various couplets (Chapters 4:36, 9:30, 9:32). All of us, *whether we believe in God or not are destined to attain salvation one day. Only the time factor differs for the best and worst among us. Gita Exhorts: the truth shall set you free.*

Bhagavad Gita is the most important scripture of the Hindus

because of the variety of the subjects discussed in its 700 couplets. It teaches in so many words the importance of the annihilation of desire and ego. It teaches the different ways to control the mind and the senses. All the great teachings of Jesus Christ regarding devotion and oneness with God, You can see in the Bhagavad Gita. The Gita describes oneness with God in chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 and 18 with lines such as *Enters into me, Attains Me, Abides in Me, Realizes Me, Attains Brahman,* etc. The beauty of the Bhagavad Gita is that it requires of a man complete change of consciousness rather than changes in life-styles or in outward appearances. Always remember that after the great Bhagavad Gita discourse, Arjuna did not become a hermit, instead he fought a very fierce war annihilating all his enemies.

Most intellectuals go through the Bhagavad Gita at least once in their lifetime. Aldous Huxley wrote: *The Bhagavad Gita is perhaps the most systematic scriptural statement of the perennial philosophy* in his introduction of *The Song of God* by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isher-wood. It had won the interest and admiration of such intellectuals like Von Humboldt of Germany and Emerson of America.

Robert Oppenheimer, the first chairman of the US Atomic Energy Commission really shocked the world, when he quoted a couplet from the Gita (Chapter 11-12) after witnessing the very first atomic explosion test in the state of New Mexico. Later in a congressional hearing. he said that nuclear bombs reminded him of the Hindu God the Lord Vishnu who said, *I am death, the devourer of all.*

I feel the whole story of Mahabharata with its ferocious war was written by sage Veda Vyasa to create a proper atmosphere to convey to the world the unwritten laws of the universe. I feel that even Lord Krishna and Arjuna were specially picked by the great sage to provide an authoritative outlook to the ultimate truths he wanted the world to know. For example, if I narrate about the US constitution, not even a fly will listen. But if the Supreme Court Chief Justice speak one line about the US constitution, the whole America will listen. It details of the US constitution is discussed between the President and the Chief Justice of Supreme Court, in a

very lively conversation, the whole world will listen. The same analogy is applicable in the narration of the Bhagavad Gita. If it was written as *Veda Vyasa said so*, it would not have been read by many, but when it was written as a lively conversation between the great archer of the world, Prince Arjuna and the greatest teacher of the world, Lord Krishna, at the outset of the great Mahabharate War, the wohole word rejoiced in reading it.

Legends say that after Veda Vyasa wrote the Mahabharata, sage Narada compelled sage Veda Vyasa to write the *Srimad Bhagavata Purana* with the help of Lord Ganapathi, so that even laymen could understand all the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita in a very devotional format.

To a person who believes that Lord Krishna is the Absolute Personality of God-head, Lord Krishna stands equal to or higher than all the teachings of Bhagavàd Gita. But to thousands of intellectuals around the globe, the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita are more important than Lord Krishna since they are ignorant of our mythology. When they read the Gita, they will not visualize the colourful, versatile, playful idol of the Gopis. They study Gita as they study Mathematics or Physics or Chemistry. In science, The *Theory of Relativity* and *Laws of Action* are more important than Einstein or Newton. In the same way, intellectuals read the Gita more as a "basic science" than as something taught by Lord Krishna. In a way, when one thinks deeply, he/she will be able to find that Lord Krishna is a microcosmic picture of the infinite.

Lord Krishna showed that "Shapeless shape" or himself as *Vishwaroopa* to Arjuna in the 11th Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. Lord Krishna said: "Arjuna, you cannot see me with your eyes, therefore I am giving you divine sight. Behold my supreme yoga power." (Chapter 11-18). Then Arjuna saw the entire universe with its many divisions resting together in the body of the God of gods. (Chapters 11-34). In the same chapter from couplets 14 to 31, Arjuna describes that "formless form" in detial. So we have to conclude that the Almighty came down as Lord Krishna and in his own words, he will come down again and again in different forms whenever the world needs him. So even though it is normal for you

and me to conceive personal facination for Lord Krishna, it is better to understand him as the Supreme Power who also came down as the Supreme Power who also came down as the Buddha and Christ and Moses and other prophets of the world.

All through the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna has said: *I am the way and come to Me.* In the Ho'" Bible, Jesus Christ has said the same statement a number of times. Both Lord Krishna and Jesus Christ spoke similarly, because both are the *Infinite Power* came in *Finite Forms.* To understand the immortal words of Christ, one needs the Bhagavad Gita and other Hindu scriptures. Without the aid of Hinduism, one may even come to erroneous conclusions, when one try to explain the sayings of Christ. Jesus Christ said: *And if Thy right eye offend Thee, pluck it out, and cast it from Thee; for it is profitable for Thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that Thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

And if Thy right hand offend Thee, cut it off, and cast it from Thee. For it is profitable for Thee that one of Thy members should perish, and not that the whole body should be cast into hell.

(Mathew 5-29, 28; and also read MARK 9-45, 46,47)

How will one explain this. If you read' the Gita, you will see very detailed explanations for what Christ said. Please read the verses 58 to 70 in the 2nd chapter. Lord Krishna said : *All senses (Indriyas) have love affairs with sense-objects. Just like a tortoise withdrawsits limbs to its shell, when it perceives danger, so too wise man, with-draw his senses (Indriyas) from sense objects, when he sees that the senses are losing themselves in the sense objects. Without the proper control of senses (Indriyas), nobody can realise the 'Absolute Truth'* Don't you think with this kind of explanations you can understand the immortal words of Christ better.

Coming back to the Bhagavad Gita, whichever way you look at reading the Bhagavad Gita, you are following the right way. If you follow the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita in a very Logical and Mathematical Manner, you will achieve salvation, since the Gita contains the unwritten laws of the universe. On the other hand, if you read it with devotion to Lord Krishna and if you follow the

Gita on devotional basis, still you will achieve salvation. Both intellectual way and the devotional way will lead you to God.

Bahairava (*terrible*)

Minor frightful form of the god Siva. Hindu (Puranic and later). Guardian deity of doorways. A so-called *ugra* aspect, generally depicted in similar style to Siva but with up to five heads and ten arms and said to have been born from Siva's blood. Attributes: hook and noose. Aspects and epithets include Kalaratri, Ksetrapala and Mahakala. Also Bhairon, linked with the cult of dogs and Bhairava, one of a group of *mahavidyas* personifying the *Sakti* of Siva.

Bhaisajyaguru (*supreme physician*)

Physician god. Budhist-Lamaist (Tibet). Accounted amongst one of a series of medicine *buddhas* known as *sMan-bla* in Tibet. In Lamaism he is the fifth in a series of *manusibudhas.* Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes and a row of small curls fringing the forehead. Colour: blue or gold. Attributes: fruit, sometimes with a howl.

Bhakti Yoga

One of the easiest Yogas or paths to follow or practise is Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga comes from the root word Bhaj, which means "to be attached to". The Bhakti relationship between man and God is described in six different forms: 1. Madhura Bhava (sexual love); 2. Kanta Bhava Bhava (love of wife for husband); 3. Shanta Bhava (love of child for parent); 4. Vatsalya Bhava (love of parent for child); 5. Sakhya Bhava (friendship); 6. Dasya Bhava (affection of servant for his master). One of the great exponents of Bhakti Yoga was Sage Narada. Narada states in his book Narada Bhakti Sutra: "A man who loves God has no wants nor any sorrows. He neither hates nor survives with a zeal for any ends of his own. Through devotion he attains peace and is ever happy in spirit." In the highest aspect of Bhakti Yoga, the devotee goes for "total Self-surrender to the will of the God." All devotional books including the Bhagavad Gita advocate this Self-surrender. *Lord Krishna* promises in the Bhagavad Gita, that He himself will take the

burden of taking care of the day-to-day problems of a devotee who has dedicated himself to God by surrendering his free will. This promise of God is repeated many times in the Gita, in different slokas. The theme of total self-surrender is oten repeated in the Holy Bible too.

Like other yogas, the final goal is salvation. Bhakti also indirectly leads to the total dissolution of the "I" or the Ego, According to Hinduism, *Ego is the cause of all problems.*

There are several great saints who practised Bhakti Yoga in India. A few of the very prominent ones are : Lord Chaitanya, Tulasi Das and Meera Devi. Lord Chaitanya and Meera Devi worshipped God as Lord Krishna. Tulsidas worshipped God as Lord Rama. One of the greatest exponents of modern times is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. He worshipped God as Mother Goddess named Kali.

Hinduism never states that any one form of Yoga is superior to other. In fact it looks down upon any effort by zealots who practise Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga or Raja Yoga to condemn Bhakti Yoga. throughout Hinduism, one can also see a disciple taking a different path or yoga from his teacher. Sage Ashtavakra, who is an Avadoota (a yogi who travels all the time), was the Guru of King Janaka (who ruled a country) and King Janaka was the Guru of Sage Suka who was indeed a great Bhakti Yougi.

Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's (Bhakti Yogi) guru was Totapuri (an Avadoota) and Ramakrishna's disciple was Swami Vivekanand who was a Raja Yogi.

Bharani (*bearing*)

Minor goddess of misfortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A malevolent *naksatra,* daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma). Also Apabharanis.

Bharat Mata (*Mother India*)

Mother goddess. Modern Hindu. Evolved from the writings of the nineteenth century Bengali, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Shrines are designed in the form of a map of India.

Bharati

Minor goddess of sacrifices. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). She is invoked to appear on the sacrifical field before a ritual. Usually associated with the goddess Sarasvati. Also regarded as a consort of Ganesa.

Bhavanavasi

Gods. Jain [India]. A generic name given to deities of youthful appearance who are arranged in ten groups all with the suffx-kumara. Thus Agni-: Asura-; Dilk-Dvipa-;Nāgā-; Stanita-; Suparna; Udadhi- ; Vayu; Vidyut-;

Bhima (*terrible*)

1. Warrior god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic) A prince of the mythical Pandu family and one of the heroes of the *Mahabharata* epic, Bhima is usually depicted wielding sword and a club. He is a son of the god of the winds Vayu. He is perceived as a god of immense strength and great cruelty which separates him from the heroic figure of Arjuna, his brother, with when he is linked in the epic. Attribute a club. Also Bhimasena.

2. Minor goddess. Buddhist An attendant of Buddakepala.

Bhrkuti-Tara (*she who froms*)

Mother goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. In Lamaismparticularly a form of Tara, the mother of the The so-called 'yellow Tara'. An emanation of Amitabha. Also identified as a female bodhisattva or buddha designate. Colour. yellow. Attribute: image of Amitabha, lotus, rosary, staff, and water jar. Three-eyed. Also jUanguli and Vajratara.

Bhumi (*the earth on which all things are formed*)

Collective name for a group of deities. Buddhist (Varyana). Twelve personifications of the spiritual spheres through which a *bohhisattva* or *buddha*-designate passes in the quest for perfection of knowledge. Common attribute: a staff.

Bhumi Devata

Vegetation goddess. Indian. Worshipped by many primitive tribes.

Bhumidevi (*the earth godess*)

Fertility goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic) [southern India]. The second wife of Visnu (or Krsna). Her son is Naraka Bhumidevi is often depicted standing on the left (occasionally right) hand of the Varaha avatara of Visnu. In the north she is known as Pusti. She is often depicted sitting on a lotus throne with bared breasts. Attributes: blue lotus, lotus, lute, pomegranate, pot with herbs, pot with vegetables and water jar. Also Bhu, Bhudevi, Bhumi, Mahi, Prthivi, Vasudhara and Zami-Mata.

Bhumiya (*guardian of fields*)

Fertility god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic) [northern India]. Guardian deity of fields, worshipped as a rough stone icon. In later times a form of Visnu.

Bhutadamara (*tumult of demons*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). May be depicted reclining on the Hindu goddess Aparajita. Attributes: snakes in the hair, and staff. Three-eyed.

Bhutamata (*mother of goblins*)

Temible goddess. Hindu. A frightful form of Parvati. Accompanied by a lion. Atribute: phallus (on the head), shield and sword.

Bhuvanesvari (*lady of the spheres*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of ten *mahavidyas* personifying the *Sakti* of Siva. Also an epithet applied to several goddesses. Aspects include Siddharatri. Attributes: hook and noose.

Bi-har

Guardiạn deity. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the guardian maharajas protecting against demons. Attended by a lion. Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, bow, knife, staff, sword and trident. Three-eyed.

Birth of Creation as Per Hinduism

Scriptures say that Brahman is the ultimate reality which is none

other than the cosmic word *Aum*. The blowing of the conch shells and the ringing of the temple bells represent the cosmic sounds.

In Christianity, Genesis explains the beginning of creation. As per scriptures, the first universe that came out of *Aum* is the Causal Universe. From the Causal Universe came the Astral Universe. From the Astral Universe came the Material Universe. As per mythology, the whole creation was created by Lord Brahma (the God of Creation) and he himself took birth from the umbilicalcord of Lord Vishnu (the God of Preservation). There is quite a lot of stories in mythology about creation.

Chandogya Upanishad syas : "In the beginning this world was merely non-being" (3 : 19 : 1) "To what does this world go back? To space.. Verily, all things there arise out of space. They disappear back into space for space alone is greater than these. Space is the final destination." (1:9:1) Some astronomers believe that the universe came into existence about 15 billion years ago, as a result of a violent explosion of a few infinitesimal Hydrogen molecules. This theory is known as the 'Big Bang Theory' and it reminds us of the Hindu idea that everything came from the Brahman which is "subtler than the atom, greater than the greatest" (Kathopanishea - 2-20). Of course, the Big Bang Theory does not explain how Hydrogen atoms came into existence in the first place. Astronomers also think that our solar system came into existence about 5 billion years ago and planet earth came into existence about 4.5 billion years ago. As per the scientists, at present allthe planets and stars are moving farther and farther apart. This phenomenon is known as the Expanding Theory of the universe.

Will this phenomenon change and universe will start to contract one day? It may happen, but nobody can give a definite answer. Now astronomers are discovering galaxies trillions of light years away. A light year is the distance travelled by a ray of light in one year. A ray of light travels 1,86,000 miles in one second. Each galaxy consists of billions of solar systems and there are several billions of galaxis in the universe. We may never find a board saying: 'Stop, Universe ends here.' Again, we do not know whether

all those galaxies we can soe put togehter with our galaxy is an atom of a superior galaxy and that superior galaxy to be an atom of a mightier galaxy and so on.

The modern astronomy with its day-to-day amazing and mind-boggling discoveries make all of us look like micro-micro organisms and our life-period on earth like micro-micro fractions of a second, which is exactly what you see in Hinduism with its details of Yugas, Kalpas and "perpetual creation and annihilation of universe."

The more we know about the world around us nowadays, makes us realise how little we know about the creation and annighilation of universe.

Bodhisattva (*one whose essence is perfect knowledge*)

Generic title for a *buddha*-designate. Buddhist [northern India, Tibet, China and Japan]. any one of the earlier stages of a future *buddha.* Depicted wearing regal dress and trappings, including a crown. The most significant include

Avalokitesvara, Maitreya and Manjusri.

Bombay Kamayan

Local disease goddess. Hindu [northern India]. Particularly worshipped at Gaya.

"Born Again"?

Long long ago, the Christian term "Born-again" was exclusively used within the church as an important part of the church's phraseology. Now it is widely used even in commercials just like the word 'Guru'. The actual word in the Greek version of the New Testament is "Anothen" meaning "Born From Above" or Born of God". Jesus said, "Except man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (St. John 3-3) and Jesus added: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again". (St. John 3-7). The closest word in Hinduism to what Jesus said is *Dwija.* The actual meaning of *Dwija* is "Twice Born".

Who is a *Dwija* (Twice born)?.... A Brahmin.

Who is a Brahmin?... He or she who knows Brahman.

What is Brahman?... That which is infinite... God.

So in a nutshell, he who knows God is the Twice-born, or he who is the Twice-born will automatically realise God. According to Hinduism, unless there is an absolute change in consciousness and absolute self-purification, nobody can achieve God-realization. Without complete change of consciousness, it is impossible to realise God and vice versa. So it is to be assumed that omnipresent Jesus Christ was referreing to a complete change of consciousness rather than any ritualistic and symbolic gestures. He who is born-again, is a Christian as well as a Brahmin.

Brahma (*the creator*)

Origin Hindu [India]. Creator god. *Known period of worship* circa 500 BC or earlie: until present day.

Synonyms many epithets including Abjaja, Abjayoni, Astakarna, Kamalasana. Centre (s) of cult restricted since circa 700 AD to twosanctuaries - at Lake Puskana in Rajputana, and at Idar near Mount Abu.

Art references sculptures generally in bronze but also in stone. Reliefs. *Literary sources* mentioned in *Rg Veda*, but properly from *Ramayana* epic and from Puranic texts.

With Visnu and Siva, Brahma is one of a trinity of supreme creator deities in the Hindu pantheon. His consort is generally the goddess of wisdom, Sarasvati, but some sources identify the goddess of speech, Vach. He also has a second consort, the mikmaid Gayatri. Originally the title referred to the power of occult utterances which became associated with the priests or Barhmans.

Brahma is depicted with four heads, often bearded, facing in four directions, and with four hands, sometimes with one of them raised in blessing or promise. As a god of knowledge he often carries the Vedas (earliest Sanskrit mythology said to have sprung from his head) in one of his hands. Other attributes include a water pot indicating prosperity, a spoon or a string of pearls. He may also carry a staff and an alms dish. He may be depicted with red or pink

skin, wearing a white robe or a loin cloth with a sacred cord across the shoulder. His sacred animal is the goose. According to one legendary source he was created from the right side of the primordial creator force. His life is anticipated as a hundred heavenly years, each of 360 days and nights. Each day, or kalpa, is equal to 4,320,000 earthly years Brahma's current age is said to be fifty-one and after each of his years, the universe is destroyed and rebuilt.

Brahma is generally less popular than Visnu or Siva, probably because he is identified solely with the primordial account of creation. Legend describes how he created himself from the primeval waters using the power of his own desire. He thought a seed into existence which grew into a golden egg and from which he emerged after a year. The two halves of the shell became heaven and earth, within which he fashined the sky. The *Ramayana* also describes him in the form a boar which raises the earth on its tusks. By contrast the *Mahabharata* accounts him born from a lotus in the navel of Visnu. Elsewhere he emerges as a fish, or as a tortoise. Negative aspects of Brahma include drunkenness and duplicity.

One source describes how the beautiful goddess Satarupa was formed from half of Brahma's own formed from half of Brahma's own self but that. in an attempt to prevent him looking on his daughter with incestuous desire, she circled around him. His four heads resulted. There was once a fifth which Siva decapitated with the thumb of his left hand. It is said that incest with his daughter is also partly responsible for Brahma's limited wortly responsible for Brahma's limited worship. Alternative legend credits him with a daughter, Vach, by whom he fathered the living world.

2. In Buddhist tradition he is also one of a group of *dharmapala* with terrible appearance and royal attire.

Brahma

Brahma, the first member of the Hindu trinity though much less important than the other two, namely Vishnu and Mahesh, is manifested as the active creator of this universe. The name Brahma is not found in Vedas and the Brahmanas, where the active creator

is merely known as Golden-Embryo (Hiranya-garbha) or the Lord of Progeny (Praja-pati). The Mahabharata considers him as born from the embryo which took shape in Vishnu's mind when he began to think of creation.

After the destruction of one universe Vishnu falls asleep, floating on the causal waters. When another universe is to be created, Brahma appears on a lotus, which springs from the navel of Vishnu. Hence Brahma is also called Navel-born (Nabhi-ja) or the Lotus-born (Kaṇja-ja). When Brahma has created the world it remains in existence for one of his days, which comes to a period of 2, 160,000, 000 years in terms of Hindu calendar. When Brahma goes to sleep after the end of his day, the world and all that is therein is consumed by fire. When he awakes he again restores the whole creation. This goes on till the hundred years of Brahma's life are completed. When this period ends he himself loses his existence, and he and all the gods and sages, and the whole universe are dissolved into their constituent elements.

Brahma is shown as having four headsthough originally he had five. The acquiring of five heads and the subsequent loss of one head makes an interesting legend. According to myths, he originally possessed only one head. After cutting a part of his own body Brahma created a woman named Satrupa (a face with hundred beauties). She is also called Vac or Saraswati, Savitri, the solar hymn, Gayatri, the triple hymn and Sandhya (twilight). As soon as Brahma saw his female creation, he fell in love with her and could not remove his gaze from her extraordinary beauty. Naturally Satrupa felt shy and tried to evade his eyes by moving away on all sides. To follow her wherever she moved, Brahma created more heads—one on the left, second on the right and the third at the back of the original first. Satrupa then rose towards the sky to escape his eyes and Brahma created the fifth head on top of all the four. This way he came to have five heads.

It is mentioned inthe scriptures that the fifth head it was chopped off by Shiv. He spoke most disrespectfully about Shiv, who in anger opened his third eye and his fifth head was burnt off by the fire. Brahma has four arms and in his hands he holds a lotus flower.

his sceptre, spoon, a string of beads, a bowl containing the holy water and the Vedas. He is therefore also called as Chaturanana or Chaturmukha (fourfaced) and Ashta-karna (eight-eared). He is usually shown as a bearded man in the full maturity of age. According to Shiv Purana, from the incestual union of Brahma and Satrupa was born Suayambhauva Manu, the progenitor of man, and from him in turn all creatures.

Brahma's vehicle is the swan or goose, the symbol of knowledge. He is therefore said to be riding on the swan (Hans-vahana). He is the source of all knowledge and his consort, Sarasvati, is the godess of knowledge. Brahma was the father of Daksha, who is said to have sprung from his thumb and Brahma personally was present at the sacrificial ceremony of that King, which was badly disturbed by Rudra. The four Kumars, the chief of whom was called Sanat Kumar, were also the sons of Brahma, who were born later. Kumar, were also the beautiful Ahalya, whom he gave as wife to sage Gautama. She is the same Ahalya, who was cursed by her husband to become a rock piece, because she was seduced by Indra, the King of heavenly spirits. She was brought to her natural human form when Lord Ram touched the rock by his feet. After this she was reconciled to her husband.

Today though Brahma's name is invoked in many religious services, his image is worshipped nowhere except at Pushkara, near Ajmer. Brahma seems to have been thrown into shade probably because in Hindu mind he has ceased to function actively after creating the world, though he will exert himself again while creating a new universe when this present one will meet its end. In fact his dynamic powers of creation have now been arrogated by Vishnu and Shiv, who appeal much more to popular imagination. Understandably, the legends about this god are not so numerous and so rich as those centred round the other two of the triad.

One very plausible reason of Brahma's, the Creator's, becoming rather unpopular among the devotees in his being rather callous in granting boons to the demons unguardedly. It is more than a coincidence that all the deadly demon's, right from Hiranyakashyapu to Ravan received their boons from Brahma

which made them singularly notorious in damaging the noble virtues of the world. Then it became necessary for Lord Vishnu to appear in his various incarnations to kill these demons. That is why the cult of Brahma's worship declined. The Hindu, later on, began to deem Brahma the sole god of worship for the demons! Hence in the entire India, there are uncountable temples to worship Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiv while their third companion in the Triumvirate, Lord Brahma has only one temple which is at the Pushkar Lake in Ajmer.

Brahma Sutras, Agamas and Darsanas

The Brahma Sutras are a number of concisestate ments regarding the whole teachings of the Upanishads. The *Brahma Sutras* are also known as *Vedanta Sutras.* They described in depth the nature of the *Brahman* (Absolute).

Sage Badarayana (Veda Vyasa) is the author of the *Brahma Sutras.*

Agamas are *Smriti literature.* Agamas means criptures. They are a group of literature dealing with the worship of the God in many forms and prescribe detailed courses of discipline for the devotee.

Like the Upanishads there are many *Agamas.* They can be broadly divided into three main groups according to the deity that forms the object of worship—*Vishnu.* Siva or Sakti. These three groups of *Agamas* have given rise to three main branches of Hinduism mainly *Vaishnavism, Saivism* and *Saktism.* The *Vaishnava Agamas* praise the Almighty as Lord Vishnu. The Saiva Agamas praise the Almighty as Lord Shiva. The *Sakti Agamas* praise the Almighty as the Mother of the Universe. Believe it or not, there are no Agamas on Lord Brahma.

Saivates have 28 Agamas and 108 Upagamas (lesser teachings). Saktiates recognizes 77 Agamas. Apart from that *Saktiates* have a large number of *Tantric* texts. *Vaishnovaites* consider the *Pancharatra* Agamas to be the most authoritative of all. Please do not confuse these *Agamas* with the *Panchatantra* work which is nothing but stries. Another popular book in the Vaishnava Agamas is Vishnu Samhita.

Each Agama consists of four sections : 1. Philosophy 2. Mental Discipline 3. Rules for constructing Temples 4. Religious practices. All Agamas are based on Sruti.

There are essentially four methods of God-realization in Hinduism which are broadly known as *Yogas* or *Margas.* The word Yoga means *union* with the Diving. Of course the word Yoga is used in so many different meanings in Hindusism. In the book *Amarakosa*, Yoga had been given many meanings starting with Nature, The state of Salvation, Determination, Chapter, Creation, Union, Logical View and even Preparation for War. In the Bhagavad Gita, the word Yoga is used in the begining of each chapter, to designate each chapter. *Arjuna Vishada Yoga* means Chapter on Arjuna's despondency.

The four Yogas are :

1. Jnana Yoga or Jnana Marga — the path of knowledge

2. Bhakti Yoga or Bhakti Marga — the path of devotion

3. Karma Yoga or Karma Marga — the path of action

4. Raja Yoga — the path based on the practice of Pranayama and thoght-control.

The different methods or paths are not airtight divisions; instead they merge into each other.

Brahmani

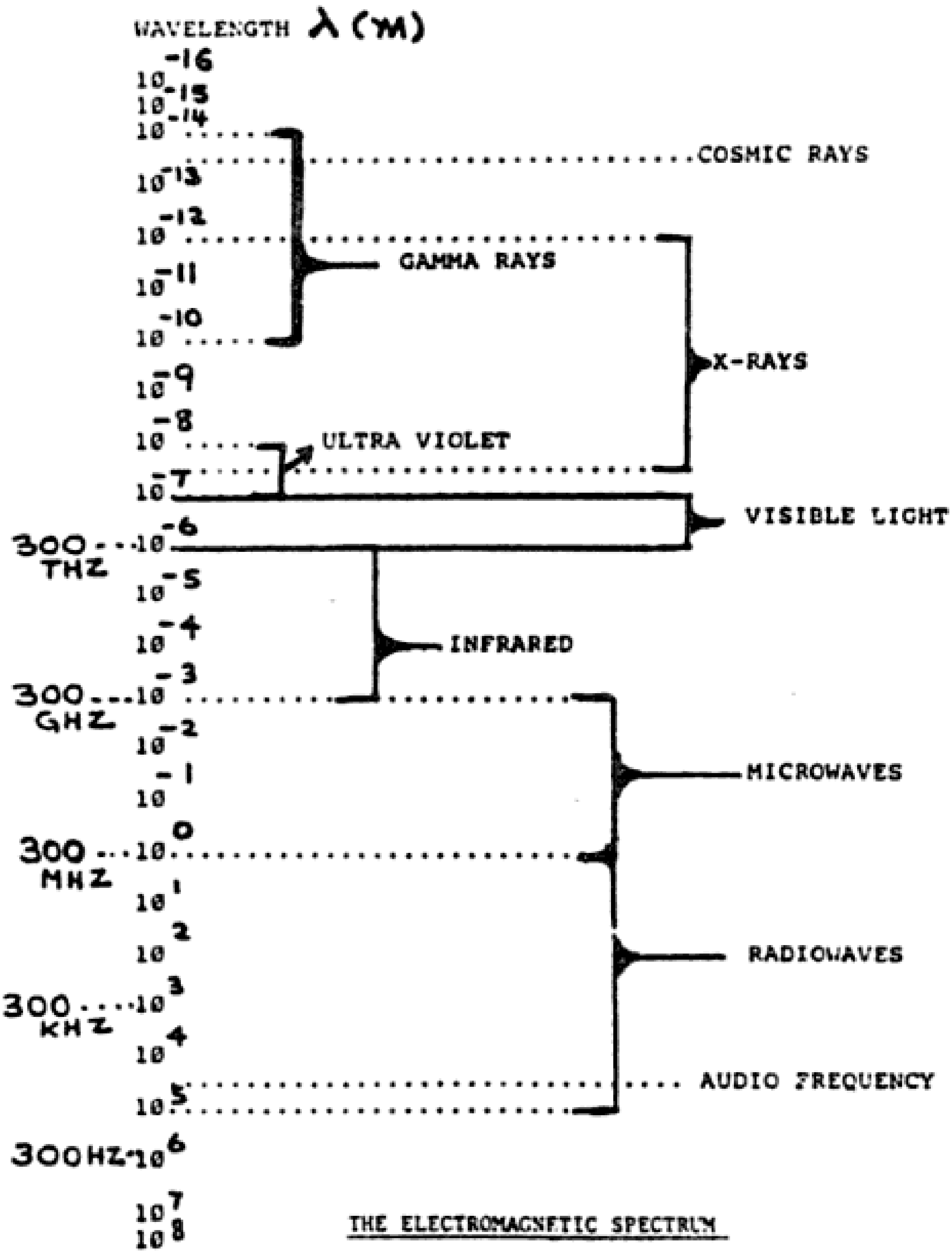
Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A Sakti who in later Hinduism became one of the group of eight astamataras or mothers. In another grouping one of nine navasaktis or mothers. She is attended by a goose and wears a yellow robe. Attributes: book, label, rosary, trident and water jar. Also Brahmi.

Brain Electrical Impulses & Samadhi

We do not know that yet ...... The brain has proved to be the most complex organ in the human body. It is irreplaceable and as I said before, today death is defined as 'brain death' or 'the absence of the electrical activity in the brain.'' The brain has been estimated to contain 10,000,000,000,000 cells. Ninety per cent of these are glia.

LIGHT - AN ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION

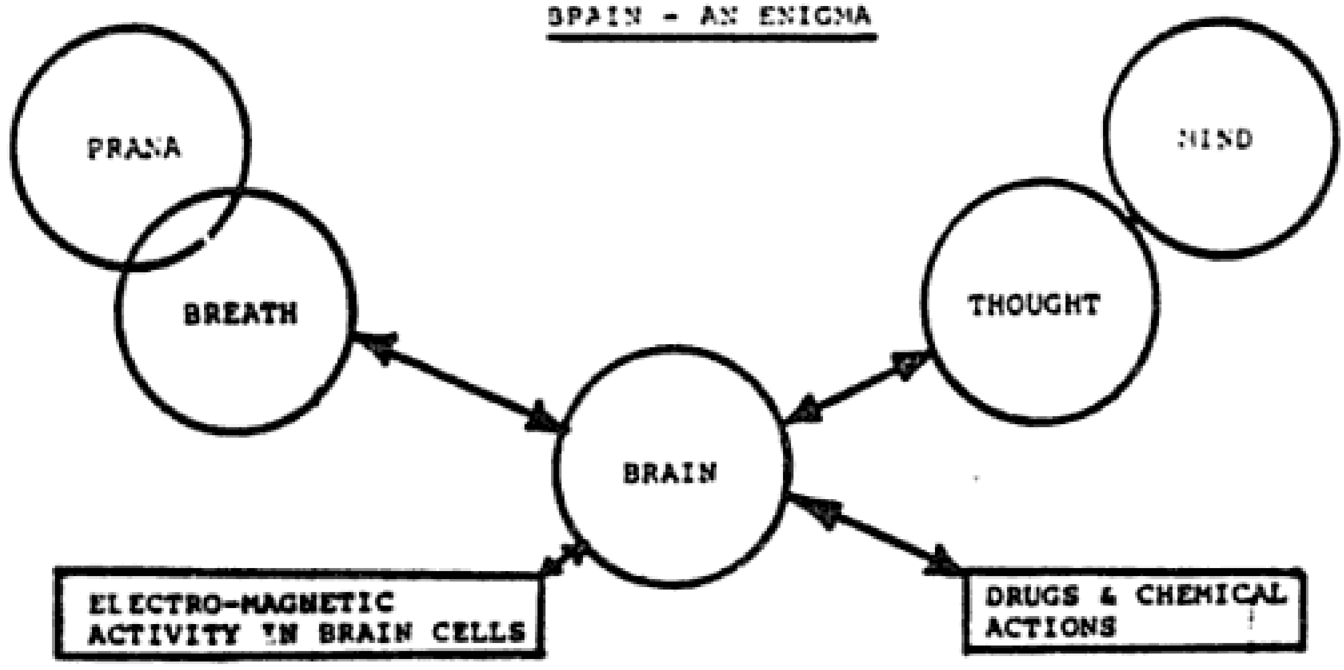
LIGHT: An electromagnetic radiation in the wavelength range including infrared, visible, and ultraviolet rays with a speed of approximately 300 meters per second when it travels in a vaccum.



THE ELECTROMAGNETIC SPECTRUM

The rest are neurons. 'Thinking and feeling' are purely electrochemical activity in the brain cells. Scientists have also found out that the reverse is equally true. That means if brain cells are properly subjected to chemicals (drugs) or electrical impulses brain generates 'thinking and feeling' phenomenon. This may seem to you as a page out of Frankenstein novel, but believe it or not a

BRAIN - AN ENIGMA



BRAIN IS THE CONTROL CENTER OF THE BODY

WHEN THE BRAIN IS ACTIVE, THE OUTPUTS ARE:

1. THOUGHTS
2. CHEMICAL ACTIONS WITHIN THE BRAIN CELLS
3. GENERATION OF ELECTRICAL IMPULSES IN CELLS
4. CHANGES IN THE BREATH PATTERN

ALL THESE FACTORS ACT VICE VERSA. THAT MEANS, IF YOU TAKE A DRUG, IT ALTERS THE THINKING PATTERN, THE RHYTHM OF BREATH AND GENERATE ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY WITHIN BRAIN CELLS. IF YOU CHANGE YOUR BREATH PATTERN, IT WILL EFFECT YOUR THOUGHTS, GENERATE DIFFERENT CHEMICAL ACTIVITY IN BRAIN CELLS, GENERATE ELECTRICAL ACTIVITY IN CELLS. WE DO NOT KNOW HOW TO INJECT ELECTRICITY INTO BODY. ELECTROCUTION & ELECTRIC-SHOCK THERAPY ARE CRUDE APPLICATIONS OF ELECTRICITY TO BODY CELLS.

BRAIN - THOUGHT - MIND - CHEMICALS - ELECTRICAL IMPULSES - BREATH - PRANA ETC ARE INTERCONNECTED.

BREATH PATTERN CORRESPONDS TO CHANGES IN PRANA CURRENTS.

MIND IS NOTHING BUT A COLLECTION OF THOUGHTS.

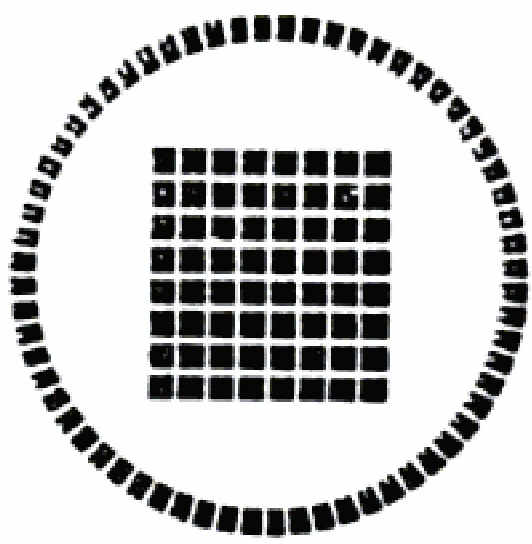
IF THE "COMPUTER PROGRAM" CAN BE CALLED "THOUGHTS" THEN WE CAN CALL "COMPUTER - CPU" AS "MIND." OF COURSE, THIS IS THE CLOSET EXAMPLE ONE CAN GIVE, AND COMPUTER & MIND ARE NOT EXACTLY ALIKE.

WHEN THERE ARE NO THOUGHTS, THE MIND IS "DEAD".
WITHOUT "PROGRAMS" A COMPUTER-CPU IS DEAD.

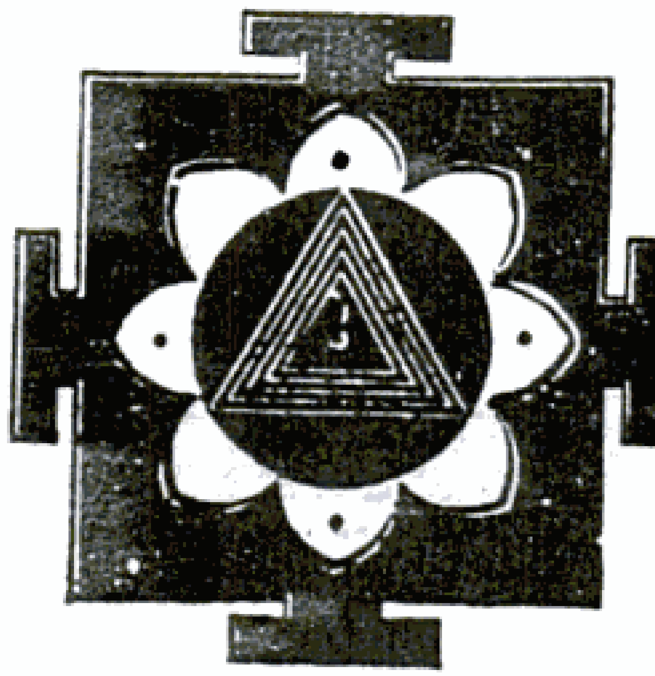
LIKE A COMPUTER-CPU, MIND COMPARES EACH THOUGHT OR VISION TO EXISTING THOUGHTS WITHIN IT. THIS THE "MENTAL PROCESS" WE KNOW.

lot of experiments are being conducted on that aspect today. Electrical stimulation of the brain is indeed a well-known ideal Scientists have found out that they can affect the brain by transmitting electrical impulses into it from outside, by implanting electrodes in different parts of the brain. Stimulating of various parts of the brain has been reported to reduce or increase aggession

MYSTERIOUS SYMBOLS OF THE UNIVERSE



SIXTY-FOUR HEXAGRAMS
OF I - CHING
(TAOISM)



KALI YANTRA
(HINDU TANTRISM)



HOPI INDIAN'S SYMBOL OF
HUMAN BODY, EARTH ETC



VIBRATORY CENTRES OF
HUMAN BODY-CHINESE SYSTEM

in animals. In fact, a very famous physicist, Jose Delgardo of Spain, exhibited this by a breath-taking experiment. He planted electrodes in the brain of a bull and allowed the vicious animal to charge at him, in the presence of spectators in a bull ring of Spain. When the bull came very close to him, Delgardo transmitted a signal to the implanted electrodes and to the amazement of

everyone the charging bull became a 'docile bull'. Of course, even scientists will admit that by no means one can compare a bull's brain or a monkey's brain to a human brain. The animal brain reacts only to instincts and it does not have the thinking capability which man has. It is a very well-known fact that scientists still do not know the actual use of some parts of human brain. The human brain still remains an enigma to the scientific world. However, some Hindu scriptures like Raja Yoga states that *pleasure and pain are in the brain.*

So I agree with you that there is a good possibility that the results of meditation *may be* the results of accidental *switching* on of certain unknown cells in the brain. A Yogi will explain to you that different aspects of Samadhi are achieved due to the result of the *awakening of Kundalini* power within the body, but science still has no idea about the existence of such vital powers within the body. Anyway one thing is very certain. Some of the strange experiences like having the 'sensation of going out of the body' are even experienced by people who have taken certain hallucinating drugs. But in ordinary people, such sensations are painful, dangerous and violent; whereas in a Yogi, the same sensations are smooth and peaceful. We may have more understanding of different levels of Samadhi as parapsychology progresses in its research. By finding out the true meaning of meditation, science may one day prove to the world the religious concept that we are all only bionic-robots of an unknown entity, which most of us like to call God. We have a long way to go. We may one day understand the true meaning of the authoritative statement of Lord Krishna to his disciple "Nimitta Matram Bhava" (Gita Chapter 11-33) - 'Be an instrument' and the statement of God to Adam "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" Genesis 3: 19). According to *Mahabhagavatam,* all this creation is only a Leela (child-play) for that supreme power. We may finally find out that we have nothing to do but to obey the unwritten laws of the universe, since we are mere *Instruments* of the Supreme Power. "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:19).

Meditation as such is positive. It has no inherent negative effects. But if someone uses depression as a form of meditation, he/she will

get into a lot of trouble. Some use drugs to help them during meditation. That also is against the basic principles of meditation. Both Hindu and Buddhist meditation methods strictly forbid the use of drugs in any form. In some Hindu meditation techniques even stimulants like tea and coffee are prohibited. Some think meditation is devilish and a form of black magic. Those ideologies are far from truth. Some think meditation is a form of *brainwashing*. People do many things out of fear of losing life but when they are sure that they will not lose their life, they come to their senses. The last but not the least accusation on meditation is that it makes people dull. But surprisingly almost all those who meditate are better persons in their lives and in their professions. All the studies conducted by the TM authorities prove this to be true. To repeat, as long as people do not use meditation as a form of brooding or for the development of hatred or venomous thoughts, there cannot be any problem at all. Something that lasted for ages must have something intrinsically good in it.

Brain Waves and Bio Feedback

Well, let me explain everything from the start. The brain generates a small amount of measurable electricity. Right now all over the world doctors pick up this electricity by the use of a machine called Electrencephalograph. The electricity so picked up is amplified and displayed in a visual form by a pen tracing a jagged line across a moving graph paper. Doctors call these graphs brain wave graphs. According to variation in frequency, scientists have named the four basic brain waves alpha, beta, delta and theta. The fastest of them all is beta, a wave-pattern associated with an awakened or active condition. Alpha waves prevail in the brain during the advanced state of relaxation. The alpha waves really rocked the scientific community and it resulted in the development of the bio-feedback system.

When scientists found out different types of brain waves, they thought brain waves were beyond the control of human beings. Then they accidentally discovered that people could consciously put themselves into the alpha brain wave state. This was indeed a revolutionary discovery in the scientific world. Then a number of

scientists started experimenting with people making them consciously produce alpha waves. *This method of a person consciously producing alpha waves by actually knowing the type of brain waves by actually knowing the type of brain waves his brain is producing beforehand is known as bio-feedback.* To state elaborately, first the person is hooked upon to an Electroencephalograph machine. Each time the alpha wave appears the machine makes a sound. The person will then try to keep the tone going continuously by making alpha waves and this is known as bio-feedback. Most people found that they actually felt relaxed in the alpha wave state. Then some people started stating that they found the underlying principle behind Yoga meditation.

The bio-feedback system is very important and it helps quite a large number of people to relax properly. But it cannot be compared with meditation. Scientists have found that some meditators even go from alpha to theta and sometimes even to delta waves during meditation. Again nobody can make a machine like Electroencephalograph a Jadge to compare bio-feedback and meditation. That machine only gives a gross measurement of brain activity. It has no capability to go deeper into the "why and how' of the brain waves. Of course EEG is used in the proper diagnosis of illness like Epilepsy and other cases of brain damage. Now-a-days it is widely used to determine whether a person is alive or dead. But science only knows that stoppage of electrical activity in brain means death. It does not know how to inject or stimulate electrical activity in a stopped or dead brain. So we still have to go a long way to know more about the brain and brain waves. How can science explain the capability of a Yogi who could remain fully awake and yet shut out himself entirely from the external world? This capability of some Yogis is fully validated by some parapsychological research centres. Let me repeat that by no means can one pronounce judgement on meditation or even compare bio-feedback and meditation with such an instrument as EEG. The scientists around the world are doing a lot of experiments on yogis and very valuable points about mediation.

Brhaspati (*lond of prayer*)

Astral god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The personification

of the planet Jupiter. In Vedic texts he appears as a priest. The son of Angiras and the guru of the later Hindu pantheon. Considered to be almost identical with Brahma. His consort is the goddess Tara and his son is Kaca. He rides in a chariot drawn by eight horses. Colour: golden yellow. Attributes: arrow, axe (golden), book, bow, rosary, staff and water jar.

Buddha (*enlightened*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The founder of Buddhism.

Known period of worship circa 500 BC to present day.

Synonyms Gautama, Siddarta. *Centre(s) of cult* pan-Asiatic. *Art references* metal and stone sculptures, paintings etc.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

The deity is regarded as having been an historical figure, born at Kapilavastu near Gorakhpur. He died at Kusinagara in circa 486 BC. His father was Suddhodand of the Sakya clan, his mother was Maya and his wife Yasodhara.

Buddha is, in certain respects, the equal of the Hindu god Visnu. He is generally depicted with shaven or cropped head and may be crowned. The hair may be crowned. The hair may be tightly curled. His colour attribute is gold.

By tradition, he preached his first sermon at Mrgadava in Sarnath near Varanasi where, after a visit in 1956 by the Dalai Lama, a enclosure of gazelles was erected.

Buddhabodhiprabhavasita (*control of the light of the knowledge of the Buddha*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: yellow. Attributes: prayer wheel on a jewelled banner.

Buddhakapala (*Buddha's skullcap*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A significant emanation of Aksobhya. Alternatively a form of Heruka. His *Sakti* is Citrasena. Colour blue black. Attributes: club, cup, drum, image of Aksobhya and knife.

Buddhalocana (*Buddha's eye*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Shingon). A female *buddha* (see Locana).

Buddhi (*perception*)

1. Minor goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Sometimes identified as consort of the Maha-Ganapati form of the elephant god Ganesa, depicted seated on his knee.

2. Minor goddess. Jain.

Budha (*awakening*)

1. Astral god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The personification of the planet Mercury. The son of Soma (Candra) and Tara or Rohini. Depicted in a chariot drawn by eight horses or lions (sometimes a single lion) Colour: yellow. Attributes: bow, club, rosary, shield and sword. Also Candraja and Candrasuta.

2. Astral god. Buddhist. The personification of the planet Mercury. Stands on a lotus. Attributes: bow and arrow.

C

Cakra (*wheel*)

Embodiment of the creator's mind. Hindu. Emerging in the form of a six-spoked wheel (less frequently eight) which also epitomizes the passage of time, and is a symbol of wholeness and protection. Particularly associated with Visnu and Krsna, the cakra is a common attribute held by many deities. It is probably of great antiquity since it is known from the time of the Indus Valley civilization (prior to 1700 BC). In Jainism and Buddhism it is the 'wheel of the law' which leads to perfection.

Cakresvari (*lady of the cakra*)

Goddes of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati. Also one of the twenty-four *sasanadevata* or messenger goddesses.

Camunda

1. Godess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of Durga. The name is said to be a contraction of the names of the demonic beings Camda and Munda killed by her. She is also recognized amongst the *saptamatara* and *astamatara* mothers as well as sometimes being regarded as a *navasakti.* She stands variously on a lion, an owl and a corpse. Attributes: a large and varied assortment of objects are held. Three-eyed. Also Yami.

2. Goddess. Buddhist. She stands upon a corpse. Colour: red. Attributes: cup and knife.

Canda (*violent*)

Terrible goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of

Durga and one of a group of nine *navadurgas* (nine durgas') Canda, with Munda, was also one of the demons killed by a form of Durga known as Camunda (contraction of the two demonic names). She is depicted with a large number of attributes. Also a form of Mahisasuramardini.

Candali (*outcast woman*)

Goddess of terrifying appearance. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet). One of a group of eight *gauri* goddesses. Colour: red or blue. Attributes : flames.

Candanayika (*mistress of the fierce*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of Durga and one of a group of nine *navadurgas* ('nine durgas').

Candarosana

God Buddhist (Mahayana). A form of the god Adksohya Colour: yellow. Attributes: noose, skin and word.

Candarupa

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of Durga and one a group of nine *navadurgas* ('nine durgas').

Candavati

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of Durga and one a group of nine *navadurgas* ('nine durgas').

Candesvara (*the lord of Canda*)

Minor god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent aspect of Siva. Also an attendant on Siva, said to have been a youthful cowherd. He sits on a lotus throne. Attributes: arrow, axe, bow, club, crown, hatchet, noose, rosary, snake, trident and water jar.

Candesvari (*fierce lady*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). She stands upon a corpse. Colour: yellow. Attributes: grass and an antelope.

Candika (*fierce*)

Goddess of desire. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). May be included

amongst the *saptamataras* or *astamataras* (mothers).

Candogra (*fierce and terrible*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A distinct form of Durga and one of a group of nine *novadurgas* ('nine durgas').

Candra

1. Planet god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Personified by the moon and also seen as a *dikpala* or guardian of the northern direction. Consorts include Kaumundi, Tara and the *naksatras* or astral goddesses. His son is Budha. He drives in a chariot drawn by ten white horses. Colour: white. Attributes: club, lotus, sacred rope and prayer wheel. The term *candra* usually refers to the cup containing the sacrificial yellow beverage *soma*, often a synonym for the deity. *Candra* is also the apotheosis of the pale yellow moon disc.

2. Planet god. Buddhist. Attended by a goose. Colour: white. Attributes: moon disce on a lotus.

Candrasekhara (*moon crested*)

Form of the god Siva. Hindu (Puranic). Portrayed standing stiffly upright and wearing snake jewellery with the moon on the left side of his head-dress. Attributes: axe and an antelope.

Cankilikkaruppan (*the black man of the chain*)

Local god. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). Worshipped in southern India.

Carcika (*repetitive chant*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: red. Attributes: cup and knife.

Cauri

Goddess of terrifying appearance. Buddhist and Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of eight gauri goddesses. Colour: yellow. Attribute: noose.

Cenkalaniyammal (*lady of the red paddyfield*)

Local goddess. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). Guardian of paddyfields

in southern India.

Chaitanya

Mendicant god. Hindu (Puranic). A deified mortal who became one of the many incarnations of the god Visnu. Born at Nadiya in 1484, AD, he died at Puri in 1527. Chaitanya was a sickly child who, according to legend, was left to his fate, hanging in tree to die, but was revived by the gods and thus became deified. He was married twice before adopting a strict ascetic existence at the age of twenty-four, from which time he travelled extensively, eventually settling in the holy city of Benares. He is remembered as a great social reformer. His main sanctuary at Nadiya includes a small statue of Krsna to whom he devoted himself.

Charvaka—The Hindu Materialism

Its founder was *Charvaka.* The most important book of the system was *Brihaspati Sutra.* I am answering you in past tense, because as far as I know this book is not available in India. We only have quotations from the above book written by other authors to refute the Charvaka philosophy.

The *Charvaka* philosophy is known as *Nastika* philosophy in Hinduism because this philosophy is independent of Vedic ideals and principles. It rejected existence of God and considered religion as an aberration.

According to this philosophy: The *material world is real and it alone exists; our knowledge of it comes from sense perception. The matter is made of air, earth, fire and water. Consciousness is only a function of matter;*

Soul means body; there is no life after death; there is no God; world is made by itself; pursuit of pleasure is the goal of man. The vedas were written by clowns. The law of karma has no basis. This philosophy states enjoy life while you can, for once, cremated, you will never return to this earth.

I can go on stating different aspects of this philosophy and they will sound like an atheistic philosophy of today. To be very frank with you. I feel much of the statements of this philosophy are like

saying, The earth is flat' and so on without any proper basis at all. At the same time, the mere existence of this philosophy in Hinduism, is the most important symbol of Hindu tolerance. In any other religion, apostles of this type of philosophy would have been crucified or burnt alive.

As I said earlier, this philosophy is non-existent in India now and almost all books on Hinduism do not even mention the mere existence of this philosophy once upon a time.

I feel this philosophy originated due to the rigidity of Hindu Orthodoxy in ancient Hinduism and at the same time, it died due to the *utmost freedom* of *thought* that existed in the later period of Hinduism.

Chattrosnisa (*with an umbrella*)

God. Buddhist. One of eight usnisa deities apparently connected with the guardian sky deities or dikpalas. Colour: white Attribute: parasol.

Chaya (*shadow*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The reflection of the goddess Sanjna, consort of Surya and mother of the astral deity Sani.

Chinnamastaka (*decapitated*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A headless form of Durga. Alos one of a group of ten *mahavidyas,* goddesses of great knowledge personifying the *Sakti* of Siva. She may be depicted holding her bead in her hands. Aspects include Viraratri. Attributes: scimitar, Skull. Also Chinnamasta.

Chos-Skyon (*protector*)

Tutelary guardian deity. Buddhist-Lamaist (Tibet). One of a group of gods of fearsome appearance who wear royal apparel. Rides a white elephant. Colour: blue. Attributes: knife and noose.

Cira (*bright*)

Minor goddess of misfortune. Hindu (epic and Puranic). A malevolent *naksatra* or astral deity; daughter of Daksa and wife of

Candra (Soma)

Citrasena (*having a bright spear*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). The *Sakti* of Buddhakapala.

Cittavasita (*control of thinking*)

Minor goddess Buddhist. One of a group of twelve vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: white Attribute: staff.

Classical Music

Indian music can be broadly divided into two groups Hindustani music and Carnatic music. The Hindustani music originated in North India and has been influenced by Persian and Arabic cultures and also by Urdu language. The Carnatic (Karnatic) Music on the other hand is the music of India.

The Carnatic music has its roots in the ancient Hindu *Sama Veda* and has absolutely no Persian and Arabic influences. It is said this music was originally composed by *Gandharvas* (celestial beings) and their composition was called *Gandharva Veda.* But was have no proof of that, since nobody has ever seen a *Gandharva Veda.* Anyway, the last 6 chapters of *Natyasastra* written by sage *Bharata* (300 A.D.) deals with music and it is said that some part of the music was written by the mythological saint *Narada.* The Carnatic music is very much associated with devotional songs to deities. Very few instruments are used in this music and even if the instruments are used, they are used alone and they imitate the singing. *The music is based on seven letters, SA, RI, GA, MA, PA, DHA.* NI, These seven letters are mathematically improvised to make thousands of tunes named *Ragas* and cyclic rhythmic patterns known as *Talas.* One of the great exponent of the Carnatic music is Swami Thyagaraja (1767-1847) of Tanjore. His mother-tongue was *Tamil* but he composed his songs Telugu. Most of his songs are devotional songs to Lord Rama. It is said that Swami Thyaga-raja has composed more than 2,000 tunes or melody types of Ragas in the Carnatic music. Lately, Carnatic music is becoming very popular after Indian movies started making film music to the tune

of Carnatic music. The present-day centers of this music are the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Mysore and Andhra Pradesh.

Code of Manu

The Code of Manu is the ethical code written by sage Manu. Very little is known about Manu. In mythology, he is known as *Manu Svayambhuva.* The Code of *Manu* is known as *Manu Smriti* or Manu Samhita or Manava Dharmashastra. It is the earliest law book of Hinduism. It has twelve chapters and it has touched all facets of life such as respectful obedience to parents and teachers; repentance and confessions; performance of sacrifices; the sanctioning of wars; allowed and forbidden foods; Offences and penances.

One of the most important part of this Code (Book X) is the description of the popular caste system. Manu wrote "For the growth of the world. *Brahman* created *Brahmanas* (Brahmins—the priestly class), Kshatriyas (Brahmins-the priestly class), Kshatriyas (warriors), *Vaishyas* (traders) and *Shudras* (manual workers) from his face, arm, thighs and feet respectively." Manu placed Brahmins in a very exalted position and placed the low- caste in a demeaning position throughout his Code.

Regarding the duties of women (Book V), Manu wrote that a girl, a young woman or even an aged lady should not do anything independently, even in her own house. She should be protected by her father during childhood, by her husband during her youth, and by her son during her old age. No sacrifice, vow or fast must be done by a woman without her husband. If a woman violates her duties in this world, after her death she will take birth as a jackal. Even beating of wife under certain conditions is allowed as per this Code.

Book I of this code gives a philosophical account of creation. Manu had stated very elaborately regarding the creation of the universe. At first the universe existed in the form of darkness and God created world, light and water, in that order. From water came out a golden egg and in that he himself was born as Lord Brahma (the god of creation). Then Lord Brahma created a Man and a Woman.

The Code of Manu also refers to the theory of reincarnation. Manu wrote: "Man obtains a life of motionlessness (plants etc) as a result of the evil committed by the body, the life of birds and beasts because of the evil committed by the speech and the life of the lowest born because of the evil committed by the mind."

Books II, III, IV, V and *VI* describes the four stages in a man's life. They are *Kaumaram* (youth), *Garhastyam* (married life), *Vanaprastham* (life of a hermit) and *Sanyasam* (renunciate's life). During *Kaumaram* a man is supposed to be 100% *Bramhachari* (celibate). During the stage of *Garhastyam* he is supposed to marry a virgin girl from his own caste. When the man's Karma as the householder is completed and when he is aged, he is supposed to take refuge in the forest and lead a hermit's life and finally becomes a *Sanyasin.* Life as a *Sanyasin* involves surrender of one's free will to the will of God.

There is a story in Hinduism almost parallel to the story of *Noah's Ark.* According to the story in one of the early scriptures in Hinduism namely *Satapatha-Brahmana,* one when Manu was washing in the sea a fish came into his hands. The fish said: *Rear me, then I will save you from the floods.* First Manu could not believe himself but later decided to obey the request of the fish. Manu first kept the fish in a jar. When it outgrew the jar, he put him in a pit. Later the fish outgrew the pit and finally became a giant. Then the fish advised him to build a ship and warned him that a flood would destroy the entire world. Manu took the advice of the fish and built a ship. This fish was the first avatar of Lord Vishnu. popularly known as *Matsya Avatar.* When the floods came. Manu entered the ship. The floods carried the ship to the top of the mountain. The flood carried off all the creatures, and Manu alone survived. After the waters receded, Manu went to the plains. It is said that here he began the work of restarting life for another 4,320,000 years (Time period for four Yugas namely, *Krita, Treta. Dvapara* and *Kali*). Hindus believe that this story of *Manu* will be repeated at the begining of universe numberless times.

The name Manu is not a person's name but a title. The name Manu means the Patriarchal Earth Ruler. Each Manu lives for a period

known as *Manvantara* (Manu-period). According to mythology, a *Kaipa* (4,320,000 human years) consists of 14 Manu-periods or 14 Manus. The 14 *Manus are* : 1. *Svayambhuva* — Manu the law-giver, 2. *Svarochisha,* 3. *Uttama,* 4. Tamasa. 5. Raivata, 6. *Chakshusha,* 10. *Brahma-Savarna,* 11. *Dharma-Savarna,* 12. *Rudra-Savarna,* 13. *Rauchya,* 14. *Bhautya.* As I said before, all these Manus come and go in never-ending cycles.

Manu covered a lot of subjects. His concept of Time and his statement that Universe undergoes an endless cycle of birth and destruction interests me most. Manu defined Time thus : When eyelids move 18 times, the time elapsed is called Kashta; thirty *Kashtas* make one *Kala*; thirty Kalas make one *Muhurta*; thirty *Muhurtas* make a day and night.

With all due respect to Code of Manu, don't you think his statements about woman are outright nonsense? How on earth, he could make a caste-system which is an outright disgrace to Hinduism?

I can very well understand your sentiments and let me explain in detail...Please understand through the Code of Manu, you are witnessing an evolving society taking grass-roots on the riverbeds of North India. So much of his Code is intended for the society of that period and it has nothing to do with the modern society we live in. Similarly, if you read Old Testament, Exodus, you will see statements regarding the treatment of slaves etc. We all know that you cannot treat anybody the way they treated slaves during the Old Testament times. As I told you earlier, history is part of every scripture, so much so we should not hastily judge different statements in them. A society maturing out of dark ages is bound to make many mistakes.

All religions in the world have given *Man* an exalted position and provided *Woman* with a demeaning position. Please understand that at that point in history, women were the weaker sex emotionally as well as physically. Today nobody will even dream of making a statement like that. Remember, the most popular democracy of the world, India had a *woman* chief-executive and all of us throughout the world, are still proud of the departed Smt. Indira Gandhi.

People may agree or disagree with her policies but all hats are off to her valor and capabilities. She is, as she wanted to be, the *Joan of Arc* of India.

Similarly, I have to admit that the *caste-system* is a disgrace to Hinduism. I don't think anybody with right mind supports caste system. It only helped Brahmin domination of lower castes as well as Hinduism and large-scale conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity.

Please also remember that Buddha did not acknowledge caste system, even the highest castes in India. So caste-system might have emerged from certain needs, but as time passed, it became a *Curse on Hinduism* than a *Blessing.* Gandhi once said : *If untouchability is a part of Hinduism, I will discard Hinduism.*

Cow The and the Hindus

When the Aryans settled in India, the cow was the only animal they had domesticated. In the Vedic age, cows were a real blessing to the community. Cows provided them with milk, butter and yoghurt. The dead cow's skin was used to make shelters and clothing.

So the community in the Vedic age was really indebted to the cow in many ways. This later made the community to look at the cow with devotion. Mythology speaks about a celestial cow named *Kamadhenu* which could grant and fulfil any wish. Lord Krishna was a cowherd and he spent most of his childhood and youth taking care of cows. As time passed, cows were looked upon as a symbol of motherhood. Even in the writings of Sage Manu, there are specific references to cows and he forbids the slaughtering of cows. The Rig Veda 6-28 reads: "*Cows are god, they seem to me to be Indra* — the god of heaven." Hindu society, especially those who belong to the Brahmin caste, is supposed to be vegetarian. To fanatic Hindus, cows are still everything. Of course, the majority of Hindus still avoid consuming beef, but they do not look down upon any person who consumes beef. Anyway, among the fanatic masses in India, the slaughtering of cows will be a very controversial issue for years to come.

Creation & Annihilation of Universe

According to Hinduism Brahman (The Absolut) alone is timeless.

All the rest, which emerged from Brahman will change shape and form in time. Birth and death are part and parcel of creation. They are also a part of time.

According to the Code of Manu, the universe undergoes endless cycles of birth and destruction. As per Manu : "When the eyelids move 18 times, the time elapsed is called a *Kashta*; thirty *Kashtas* make one *Kala; thirty Kalas* make one *Muhurta*; thirty *Muhurtas* make a day and night."

Hinduism was influenced by Greek astronomy in its calculations of time. The seven-day week was introduced in India by the Greeks and India started following it during the Gupta dynasty period (A.D. 320-480). The zodiac signs were also brought to India by the Greeks.

The time between 3 a.m and 6 a.m. is considered to be Brahma Muhurta. It is supposed to be the most auspicious time of the day. It is said that during this period of time all celestial beings take rest is very little thought activity in the ethereal world. As such, this period is considered the best time for meditation and for spiritual activities. It is said, any problem can be solved if you try to solve it during this period of time.

Time immemorial is measured in cycles called Kalpas. One Kalpa is 12,000 years for Devas - gods of Heaven, or one Kalpa is 12,000 divine years. One divine year is equal to 360 human years. So one Kalpa is 4,320,000 human years. After each Kalpa there is another Kalpa.

Each Kalpa is divided into four Yugas or ages. They are Krita, Treta, Dvapara, and Kali. Lord Krishna lived in the Dvapara, and Kali. We are now in the Kali Yuga. At the end of Kali Yuga the universe will be destroyed by Pralaya (deluge) to start the cosmic creation once again. Things in the universe deteriorate from Yuga to Yuga. Krita Yuga is four times the length of Kali Yuga. Its length is 1,728,000 human years. Treata Yuga is three times the length of Kali Yuga. Its length is 1.296,000 human years. Dvapara Yuga is two times the length of Kali Yuga's length is 432,000 years.

One thousand Kalpas constitute a day for Lord Brahma and the same period constitutes a Brahma Night. After 100 Brahma years (each of 365 Brahma Days and Nights) Brahma changes or dies. As per legends, when one Brahma changes, a saint named Romesha (hairy saint) loses one hair. When he loses all the hairs in his body, he dies. When one Romesha saint dies, Sage Ashtavakra (eight-curves in the body) loses one curve. When he loses all the eight curves, he dies. So *time devours everything*! To begin with, please do not say that we are "worried" about salvation. Do not even say that we are concerned about salvation. Will you ever say that the Mississippi river is worried or concerned about reaching the Gulf of Mexico? No, because you know that, as per the laws of physics, the Mississippi river has no other alternative but to seek and merge in the Gulf of Mexico as its final destination. It is the nature of the Mississippi river to flow into the Gulf of Mexico. The same ideology stands when explaining our nature of seeking salvation. The *individual soul* (*Atman*) *by nature seeks to reach the Absolute soul* (*Paramatman*). If you ask me, if it is purely instrumental, the answere is yes, it is instrumental. By our human will, we can delay or accelerate our soul's merging with the Absolute but we have no choice. According to the Bhagavad Gita, Yoga or union with the divine or the Absolute is for all. As I said before, the only difference is the time factor between the best and worst among us. Some will attain salvation with this life and some will take millions of lives to attain salvation. Now coming back to the first part of your question, I think the naked truth of the instrumentality of the universe such as the *repeated birth and death of the universe* reaffirms the fact that the urge to seek salvation among us is purely instrumental or involuntary or natural.

As long as we feel pleasure or pain and as long as we feel that this physical body is the ultimate "I", we are not going to be content with life as it is. So the urge to seek "perennial happiness and peace" is inborn in all of us. Of course, this seeking of everlasting happiness and peace will definitely start on a trial and error basis. Remember, each time I brought you a toy, when you were a small boy, you felt you achieved all the happiness in the world. Look at you now. You feel a brand new sports car will give you all the

happiness in the world. In a few years' time, when you have that car, you would like to have something else. What I said above is true regarding you, me and everyone else. This seeking of happiness in material cbjects will continue until we find. All of us make many mistakes in our scarch of everlasting happines and peace. The wise ones among us will learn with a few mistakes and others will repeat the same mistakes over and over again.

So it is in the nature of all of us to seek salvation and we have no choice. All of us are purely *instrumental.*

Cunda

Goddess. Buddhist [eastern Bengal and Tibet]. An emanation of Vajrasattva or Vairocana. A female *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Also seen separately as a deification of literature, one of a group of twelve *dharanis.* She may stand upon a man. Colour: white or green. Very large variety of attributes. Also Aryacunda.

D

Dadimunda

Tutelary god. Singhalese Buddhist [Sri Lanka]. An attendant on the god Upulvan to whom he acted as treasurer. The guardian of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. His sacred animal is an elephant. Also Devata bandara.

Daksa (*skilled and able*)

Sun god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). The son of Brahma and Aditi, he is an *aditya* and demi-urge. His consort is Prasuti, and he is said to have had up to sixty daughters. He appears in conflict with his son-in-law Siva as the main offender against Siva's consort Sati (accounted as one of his daughters), who was so insulted by Daksa that she committed suicide by jumping into a ritual fire. Siva took revenge by decapitating Daksa but later, after intercession from other gods, Brahma brought him back to life, giving him the substitute head of a sacrificial Prajapati.

Danaparamita

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. One of twelve *paramita* deities and a spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: reddish white. Attributes: an ear of rice and a banner with pearl.

Danu

Primordial goddess, Hindu (Vedic). The word Danu is used to describe the primeval waters and this deity is probably their embodiment. She is known as the mother of the demonic personality Vrtra, who engages in combat with, and is defeated by, the rain god Indra. In later Hinduism she is perceived as a daughter

of Daksa and the consort of Kasyapa.

Daya (*compassion*)

Goddess. Hindu (Puranic) A *Sakti* of Acyuta (never falling), a minor aspect of the god Visnu.

Devaki (*divine*)

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Daughter of Devaka and consort of the mythical king Vasudeva, Devaki bore eight sons, including Krsna and Balarama. Her brother Kamsa believed that the eighth child would kill him and he slaughtered the first six sons. In order to save the remaining two, Visnu implanted the 'seed' of his *avataras* in Devaki's womb (in the form of hairs from his head), before transferring Balarama to the womb of the goddess Rohini and Krsna to Yasoda, the wife of a cowherd, Nanda.

Devananda (*delight of the gods*)

Goddess. Jain [India]. The mother of Mahavira.

Devapurohita

Astral god. Hindu (Puranic). An epithet for the planet god Jupiter.

Devasena (*heavenly host*)

Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). One of the consorts of Skanda who normally stands to his left. Attribute: lotus in the left hand.

Devi (*the goddess*)

Goddess epitomizing the active female principle. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Devi evolved as a major goddess out of the older notion of mother and vegetation goddesses. She is seen more as an abstract principle who will nevertheless respond directly to worshippers' prayers. By the fifth century AD she appears in many forms as the active (feminine) aspect or power of male deities. General attributes: conch, hook, noose, prayer wheel and trident. Devi is also the generic name given to a female deity, in her capacity as the consort of a god or *deva*. See also Sri-Devi Bhudevi.

Devils and Ghosts

According to Hinduism, a devil is an Illusion or Maya. In

Christiantiy, it is said that Devil or Satan "Fell from Heavens". In the Bible, it is described as follows: "...He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: For he is a liar, and father of it." (St. John 8-44).

Hinduism recognizes the Satanic force as the effect of Maya (Illusion) and Maya is caused by *Ignorance.*

Meditation is one of the ways to get out of this delusion. Anyway, Hinduism does not regard the devil as the personification of a dangerous being, but only as a negative force standing against the spiritual upliftment of man.

Who creates the demonic forces in the world? We ourselves individually and collectively by our selfish and destructive thoughts, words and actions give birth to a multitude of demons. Hinduism calls these demons *Kritiyas.* These demonic forces attack the weak and young among us. This is the reason why Hindu saints say that by hating someone we may be unknowingly destroying the sanctity of the homė and even contribute to the destruction of the well-being of younger and weaker members of the family. If a whole nation personifies itself on hatred towards someone, that nation will ultimately meet with disaster.

Well, when I was telling you about demons, I was trying to give you a proper explanation based on trying to give you a proper explanation based on very advanced Hindu scriptures. But if you pick up mythology, it is full of ghosts and demonic beings. They are mainly Pretas and Bhutas which are actually departed souls of people.

Pretas are souls which left the bodies and by their own fault cannot enter any new body. *Pretas* are supposed to be under constant pain and they ensily influence people with weak minds. *Bhutas* are souls of people who left after an accidental death. *Bhutas* like *Pretas* are trouble-makers and it is said that both *Pretas* and Bhutas do not go to places where God-fearing people live. I know it will be difficult for you to believe in *Pretas* or *Bhutas* and I can understand your frame of mind. Mythology, as I told you before, is full of stories

and it is upto you to believe in anything you before, is full of stories and it is upto you to believe in anything you want or not.

Dhanada

Goddess. Bhuddhist (Mahayana). One of the emanations of the *dhyanibudhdha* Amoghasiddhi, also a form of the goddess Tara. She sits upon a moon throne with an unnamed animal in attendance. Colour: green. Attributes: book, blue lotus, image of Amoghasiddhi, noose and rosary.

Dhanistha (*very rich*)

Minor goddess of misfortune. Hindu (Puranic). A malevolent *naksatra* or *astral* deity; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma). Also Sravistha.

Dhanvantari (*travelling through an arc*)

Sun god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). In later tradition a minor incarnation or *avatara* of the god Visnu, also closely associated with medicine. In Vedic mythology Dhanvantari carried the ambrosia created from the primeval ocean of milk. He brought medical science to mankind. Only as the religion evoved did he become identified as an *avatara*. As Kantatman (Pradyuman), he is thought to be Kama reincarnated after his death at the hands of Siva. Various other epithets and existences are attributed to this deity. Offerings are due to him at dusk in the north-eastern quarter. He is the guardian deity of hospitals which are usually in the vicinity of a sanctuary of Visnu. Attributes: two bowls containing ambrosia. Also Kantatman.

Dhara (*supporting*)

Attendant god. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of eight *vasu* deities answering to the god Indra. Attributes: lotus, plaugh, rosary and spear.

Dharani (*earth*)

1. Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Consort of Parasurama and an *avatara* of the goddess Laksmi.

2. Collective name for a group of deities. Buddhist. Twelve

personifications of a particular kind of short mystical religious text used as a charm. Also *dharini.*

Dharma (*justice*)

Origin Hindu [India].

Known period of worship circa 300 AD until present.

Synonyms Dharme.

Centre (s) of cult none specific. *Art references* stone and metal sculptures. *Literary sources* epic texts including *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*; Puranic texts, but also see the *Rg Veda.*

The god of law who originates as a creator god and one of the sons of Brahma, but almost certainly derives from the dharmas or archetypal patterns of society identified in the Rg Veda.

According to tradition he is the consort of thirteen daughters of Daksa and the father of Yudhisthra. Also regarded as a minor avatara of Visnu, appearing as a bull standing for the redemption of souls.

In Bengali tradition Dharme (probably of the same derivation) has been annually engaged in a sacred marriage to the earth at the time of year when a tree known as the *sal* is blossoming. Birds are sacrificed in a sacred grove after which the tribe repairs to the hut of the village shaman and the marriage is enacted between the priest and his wife, followed by a sexual free-for-all.

Dharmadhatuvagisvara

God of the law. Buddhist. A variety of Manusri and therefore an emanation of Amitabha. colour: reddish-white. Attributes: arrow, bell, book, bow, hook, image of Amitabha on crown, staff, sword and water-jar. Depicted with four heads and setting the law wheel in motion.

Dharmakirtisagaraghosa (*sound of the ocean of the glory of the law*)

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted amongst one of a series of medicine *buddhas* known as a *sMan-bla* in Lamaism. Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes. colour: red.

Dharmamegna (*cloud of the law*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of twelve deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: blue Attributes: book and staff.

Dharmapala

Collective name for a group of eight tutelary deities. Buddhist and particularly Lamaist [Tkibet]. They wear royal apparel but are of terrible appearance and are considered to be the guardians of the law. General attributes: axe, cup, knife and snake.

Dharmapratisamvit (*analysis of nature*)

Goddess of nature analysis. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of a group of four pratisamvits. Colour: whitish-red. Attributes; noose and staff with crook.

Dharma Sutras

Dharma Sutras are a part of *Vedangas*. They give elaborate details of rules of conduct and duties of men in different stages of life and the rights and duties of kings. They also deal with religious matters such as purification rites and funeral ceremonies. They even deal with rights and duties of women and judicial matters. They also describe penances for various sins. The most important Dharma Sutras is the *Manu Smriti* or the code of Manu written by sage *Manu*, It has 2,694 stanzas running into 12 chapters.

The next important Dharma Sutras is the *Yajanavalkya Smriti* written by sage Yajanavalkya. It has 1,013 stanzas. Another important Dharma Sutras is the *Gautama Smriti* written by sage *Gautama*. The code of Manu is still very popular among Hindus. The Dharma Sutras exercise everlasting influence on Hinduism. It is the backbone of Hindu ethics and morality. Of course much of the rituals described in the Dharma Sutras are not practied today. But orthodox members of the Brahmin caste still observe the five daily Dharmas known as *Pancha Maha Yajnas.*

The five daily Dharmas observed by the orthodox members of the Brahmin caste are known as the Pancha Maha Yajnas. They are :

1. *Deva Yajna* - worship of God

2. *Brahma Yajna* - worship of Lord Brahma

3. *Pitri Yajna* - worship of ancestors

4. *Bhuta Yajna* - worship of spirits

5. *Nara Yajna* - worship of man.

All Brahmins still undergo three important ceremonies in their lifetime as dictated by the Dharma Sutras. They are :

1. *Upanayana* - receiving the holy-thread in boyhood. After this ceremony the boy is called a *Dwija* (twice-born)

2. *Vivaha* - marriage

3. *Anthyeshti* - funeral rites.

Dharmavasita (*control of law*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve *vasitas* personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: white. Attributes: water jar on a red lotus.

Dharti Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu (Puranic). A deity who appears late in Hinduism and equates with Prthivi or Bhumidevi. According to some authors she is the consort of Thakur Deo. Also Dhartri Mai, Darti Awwal.

Dhatar (*creator*)

Sun god. Hindu (Puranic). An original Vedic list of six descendants of the goddess Aditi or adityas, all of whom take the role of sun gods was, in later times, enlarged to twelve, including Dhatar. Colour: golden. Attributes: two lotuses, lotus rosary and water-jar. Also Dhatr.

Dhisana

Minor goddess of prosperity. Hindu (Vedic). Associated with the acquisition of wealth. Also the name given to a bowl of fermented drink or soma.

Dhrtarastra (*his empire is firm*)

Minor god. Buddhist. One of the *dikpalas* or guardians of the easterly direction. Colour: white, Attribute: lute.

Dhrti (*firmness*)

Goddess. Jain [India]. A minor deity with no significant role or attributes.

Dhruva (*immovable*)

Astral god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The son of Uttanapada, a star in the constellation of Ursa Minor which was the pole star in the last millennium BC. An *avatara* of Visnu. Also one of a group of *vasu* deities answering to the god Indra. In different context, the description of a kind of fixed icon. Attributes: prayer wheel, rosary, spear and water jar.

Dhumavati (*smoky*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of ten mahavidyas personifying the Sakti of Siva. Aspects include Darunaratri (night of frustration), who is also regarded as one of the personifications of the goddess Sakti.

Dhumorna (*smoke*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The consort of Yama. Attribute: a pomegranate.

Attribute: a pomegranate.

Dhumravati

Terrible goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Attributes: skull in the hand and garland of skulls, sword and tusks.

Dhupa (*incense*)

Mother goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the *astamatara* mothers. Colour: yellow. Attribute: a censer.

Dhupatara (*incense-Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: black. Attribute: a

censer.

Dhurjati (*with matted hair*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A manifestation of Siva in which his body is smeared with ash.

Dhavajagrakeyura (*ring on a banner*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya. She sits on a sun throne. Colour: dark blue, black or yellow. Attributes: club, image of Aksobhya, noose, pestle, prayer wheel, staff, sword, tiger skin and trident. Three-headed and three-eyed.

Dhvajosnisa

God. Buddhist. An *usnisa* deity apparently connected with the guardian deities or *dikpalas* in the south-western quarter. Colour; reddish-blue, Attributes: banner with jewel.

Dhyanaparamita (*perfection in meditation*)

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. A *paramita* and spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: darkish sky blue. Attributes: banner with jewel, and white lotus.

Dhyanibuddha

General name of a spiritual or meditation *buddha*. Buddhist (Vajrayana). An emanation of the Adibuddha and generally regarded as one of a group of five representing the cosmic elements. The mystic counterpart of a human *buddha*. When the five are represented as a group, their common attribute is a staff on a lotus.

Dhyanibuddhasakti

Collective name for a group of goddesses. Buddhist. The five *Saktis* of the *dhyanibuddhas*. Common attributes include a cup and knife.

Digambara (*naked*)

Goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. The *Sakti* of Yogambara. Attribute: a bowl.

Note. Digambara is also an epither of the goddess Kali in Hindu religion.

Dikkumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of *bhavanaṿasi* (dwelling in places). They have youthful appearance and are associated with rain and thunder.]

Diksa (*initiation*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The consort of Ugra and mother of Santana. Also the name of the Buddhist Tantric initiation ceremony.

Dipa (*personification of the oil-lamp*)

Goddess of light. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Considered to be amongst the group of *astamataras* (mothers). Colour: blue or red. Attribute: a lamp.

Dipa Tara (*lamp Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: yellow. Attribute: a torch.

Dipankara (*light causer*)

Deity. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a minor group of *buddhas*. Colour: yellow. Attributes: none in particular.

Dipti (*brightness*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Puranic). No details available.

Dirghadevi (*long goddess*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Consort of the god Nirrti.

Disa (*the ten directions of space*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Consort of Siva in his terrible aspect of Bhima and mother of the minor god Sarga (creation).

Diti

Goddess. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The daughter of Daksa,

a consort of Aditi (in the Rg Veda) or Kasyapa and the mother of a race of demons. Attributes: blue lotus, child and fruit. See also Aditi.

Drugs and Hinduism

Hinduism very clearly understands the power of drugs and Hindu saints knew which herbs in fact give the so-called "high" feeling among users. Hinduism looks down upon the consumption of drugs like LSD, Heroine and "Crack" as means to attaining different levels of consciousness. The reason is that *even though certain drugs can bring a man to a higher level of consciousness, that chemical induced higher consciousness is momentary and dangerous.* People using drugs usually go into depressive states of mind after a few moments of "chemical paradise". So hours and days of mental agony for a few moments of higher experience are not the answer. Drugs, according to Tantric literature, result in the sudden shooting up of Kundalini power in the Sushumna nerve, but since the ordinary body is not conditioned to accept sudden outbursts of power within itself, it reacts in physical and mental disorder. That is the reason why a drug addict undergoes violent hallucinations and suffers permanent damage to his brain. So if at all any drug is used, it should be used only under the advice of a competent medical doctor or under the guidance of a Guru with has thorough knowledge of herbal medicine and Ayurveda.

Let me repeat that Hinduism strictly forbids use of drugs in meditation. In some forms of the Hindu meditation method, even stimulants like coffee and tea are forbidden.

Durangama (*going far away*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified bhumis recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: green. Attributes: staff on a great lotus.

Durga

Origin Hindu (Puranic) [India). Vengeful warrior goddess.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD (but probably known from earlier times) until present.

Synonyms Kumari; Shakti; Agni-Durga (eight-armed); Aparajita (unconquered).

Centre (s) of cult none.

Art references sculptures generally bronze but also stone. Reliefs.

Literary sources chiefly *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* epics and Puranic texts, but mentioned by name in Vedic literature.

Durga is one of the angry and aggressive aspects of the goddess Sakti, whose earliest role in Hindu mythology is to fight and conquer demons but who also personifies the *Sakti* or female aspect of any male deity. Iconographically, Durga is depicted as a beautiful golden-skinned woman who rides upon a lion or a tiger. She has eight or ten arms, each bearing a weapon presented to her by different gods and including the conch shell of Visnu, the trident of Siva, the bow of Rama and the *sudarshan* (spoded disc) of Krsna. These gifts extend to her the power of the eight or ten gods. She may wear a necklace of skulls. She is associated with the Himalaya and Vindhya mountains and is often depicted slaughtering the buffalo-demon Mahisa by thrusting her trident into his doby.

In a contrasting aspect in later Hindu traditions, Durga takes the role of a mother goddess and consort of Siva and becomes partly syncretized with Parvati. She is also linked with the fertility of crops. In this capacity her most important festival is the *Durga Puja,* celebrated at harvest time, during which devotees persistently make obscene gestures and comments to stimulate her fecundity. She is depicted flanked by four other deities, Laksmi, Sarasvati, Ganesa and Karrikeya, who are said to be her children.

In general Durga is perceived in northern India as the gentle bride epitomizing family unity, whilst in southern India she is revered more in her warlike and murderous aspect.

Durga

Durga, the consort of the well-known god Shiv, is perhaps the most important goddess of Hindus. She is a multi-dimensional goddess. She has so many nams, so many personalities and so many facets.

She is worshipped by millions of people all over India and a sizeable number of them give her an importance more than god Shiv himself.

She was first born in the house of Daksha, one of the progenitors of mankind and was named as Satee. She was married to Shiv but sacrificed her life by self-immolation on a pyre. The story says the Daksha instituted a massive sacrifice and in the ceremonies apportioned no share to Shiv. Satee, his daughter, had come to this ceremony against the advice other husband, Shiv, who was not invited by the latter's father-in-law. Satee could not bear this insult and entered the sacrificial fire. Hearing the news Shiv flew in a rage and reached there with his blazing trident.

He pierced the sacrificial altar with great violence. He ran up to the gods sitting there and knocked out all things at the spot. So many powerful demi-gods in attendance to Shiv attacked the place together with their lord. The mountains tottered, the earth shook, the winds roared and the depths of the sea were disturbed. The catastrophe is thus described in Purans: "Indra is knocked down and trampled on, Yama has his staff broken, Saraswati and Matris have their noses wounded, Bhag has eyes pulled out, Pushan has his teeth knocked down his throat, Chandra (the moon) is pummelled, Agni's hands are broken, Bhragu's beard is crushed, Prajapatis are beaten and the gods are running helter and skelter". In the end Vishnu intervened and propitiated the wrath of Shiv. Daksha acknowledged Shiv's supremacy and apportioned a due share to this god.

In her second appearance Durga came to the world as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya. As she was Satee, the daughter of Daksha married to Shiv in her previous birth, in the second life too she wanted to be the consort of Shiv. But after the sacrifice of his first wife Shiv had lost all interest in marriage. Parvati now realised that there was only one way of attracting his attention and winning his affection. She undertook ascetic rites and recited praying hymns for one thousand years to please god Shiv. Only then Shiv was convinced that Parvati was worthy of being accepted as a wife. The wedding of Shiv and Parvati is described in a very colourful

manner in Puranic literature and so many songs have been composed how the marriage procession of Shiv is composed of beggars, mendicants and wanderers.

As mentioned above goddess Durga has a variety of forms with different attributes. In her milder form she is Parvati (the mountain-girl), Uma (the light), Gauri (the yellow-complexioned beauty), Himavati (daughter of Himalaya), Jagatmata (mother of the world) and Bhavani (the goddess of the universe); in her terrible form she is Durga (the inaccessible), Kali or Shyama (he black complexioned), chandika or Chandi (the fearful one) and Bhairavi (the terrible). All these are broadly included under the name of Devi of Maha Devi (the great goddess).

How Parvati, the consort of Shiv, came to have the name of Durga is an interesting narration. On one occasion the sage Agastya asked Kartikeya why Parvati, his mother was called Durga. Dartikeya replied that some time back there was a demon, named Durg, the son of Ruru. He with his austerities pleased Brahma and by the god's blessings became very powerful. He conquered the three worlds and even dethroned Indra, the king of gods. Every one was afraid of him. He abolished all religious ceremonies so that Brahmans were terrified and stopped reading Vedas.

All the gods assembled and prayed to god Shiv to protect them from the tyranny of this demon. Shiv took pity on them and asked Parvati to go and destroy the evil demon. She calmed the gods and accepted the commission. There was long drawn-out and fierce battle. As soon as the giant came near with his evil followers Parvati assumed 1000 arms and also brought out a number of weapons out of her body. She repelled every attack and in the end the demon assumed the shape of a fearful buffalo and with his horns cast trees, rocks and mountains on the goddess, who cut everything into pieces. The goddess Parvati pierced him with her trident and subdued him. The gods with this deliverance praised the goddess and honoured Parvati with the name of Durga.

Another legend connected with Durga is that Mahishasur, a king of the demons, at a certain period overcame all the gods and reduced them all to the state of incompetence. Indra together with all gods

approached Shiv and Vishnu. These two great gods became very angry misdeeds of this demon and at the request of the suffering gods produced from their energy a goddess named Mahamaya or Durga. Streams of glory emanated from all gods and entered Mahamaya, who now resembled a mountain of fire and strength. This goddess killed the demon Mahishasur and delivered the gods from the distress.

The festival of Durga, celebrated during the month of Ashwin, is the most popular festival of Bengal. All the business in the state is more or less suspended and the most beautiful and costly images of the goddess are made. The image of Durga has ten arms. In one of her right hands is a long pointed spear, with which she is piercing the heart of demon Mahishasur, with one of the left hands she holds the hair of this giant. Her all other hands are also filled with various weapons. Against her right leg leans a lion and against her left leg lies the demon subdued and defeated. Very frequently, small images of Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya and Ganesh are also placed by the side of the goddess. At the close of the festival, these images are immersed into the river.

According to Markendaya Puran the goddess Durga has assumed ten different forms in order to destroy two great demons, Shambhu and Nishambhu. It is said that at the close of the Tretayug, these two giants by their austerities had obtained great powers. Being exalted above the gods they began to fight against them. They achieved many victories and gods were reduced to the deplorable state of helplessness. They solicited the help of Brahma and Vishnu, who referred them to go to Shiv. Shiv advised them to pray to Durga, who could be able to defeat the two demons. Finally when gods appealed to Durga for ending their troubles, she agreed.

Durga assumed the form of a beautiful woman and first enticed the minds of the two demons. Both of them sought to capture her and sent his best generals with a huge army to capture this female. These two generals named Chundu and Mundu went to the Himalayas but were defeated and killed by the goddess Durga and her mount, the divine lion. Now the two giants, Shambhu and Nishambhu, themselves marched to the Himalayas to capture

Durga. These two demons had a general who had a blessing that the drops of blood falling on the ground from his body would create thousands of demons. At last Durga could annihilate him only when Durga's two forms namely Chandee and Kali both combined to neutralise this blessing. In the fierce engagement the goddess opened her mouth and drank every drop of blood before it fell on the ground while the other counterpart fought the demons and that general together. Eventually both the giants were killed.

Markandeya Puran places the ten forms of Durga in the following order : (1) Durga, the goddess who first received and showed her beautiful face to entice the demons; (2) Dashbhooja—in this form she destroyed a part of the army of demons; (3) Singh-Vahinee—in this form she fought with Rakta-Vijay, the general whose drops of blood created thousands of demons; (4) Mahisha-Mardinee-in this form she slew Shambhu, the demon, who had taken the form of a buffalo; (5) Jagdhatree—in this form she overcame the army of demons; (5) Jagdhatree—in this form she destroyed Rakt-Vijay by drinking the drops of blood and not allowing them to fall on the ground; (7) Mukt-Keshee-in this form with flowing hair she again overcame another army of the demons; (8) Tara-in this form she killed Sambhu; (9) Chinnamushtika-in this form she killed Nishambhu; (10) Jagadguree—in this form she was worshipped by all the gods on their salvation.

Singh-Vahinee—In this form Durga is benign as well as belligerent. She is represented as the goddess with yellow garments and a glittering crown. She is sitting on a lion with either four, eight or ten hands. One hand is always shown bestowing a blessing on the worshippers.

This image is very popular in the whole of north India and night-long prayers (Jagratras) are held in temples or in homes by househoders. Devotional songs are sung and in the early morning the worship comes to a close.

Tara—In this shape the goddess is shown as a fierce black woman with four arms with one foot on the breast of Shiv, her consort. In one hand she holds a sword covered with blood; in another she has a demon's head while the remaining two are holding other lethal

weapons. The foot on Lord Shiv's breast denotes a story that when blood-thirsty Durga's anger against the demons could not be controlled and she continued destruction, Lord Shiv squatted on her path. When she put her foot on him, she immediately realised that she was treading upon her consort and her anger subsided.

Kali—This is the ferocious aspect of Durga perfectly personified. According to the Purans, this image of Durga as Kali, so widely worshipped in eastern parts of India, owes its origin to the battle of Durga with Sambhu and Nishambhu. She after her victory over these demons was so overjoyed that she started the dance of death. Here the story resembles that of Tara. In her great ecstasy Kali continued the destruction. As the prayers of all gods could not calm her, Lord Shiv had to intervene. Seeing no other way of dissuading her the god threw himself amongst the bodies of slain dmons. When Durga saw that she was dancing over the body of her husband, she put her tongue out of her mouth in sorrow and surprise. She remained stunned in this posture and this is how Kali is shown in images with the red tongur protruding from her mouth.

Adhyatma Ramayan gives another story of the origin of Kali. It says that when Ram returned home with Sita after destroying Ravan, he was boastfully narrated the stories of his victories to Sita. She smiled and said, "You rejoice because you have killed a Ravan with ten hands. But what shall you do with a Ravan with one thousands hands?" Ram very proudly boasted that he would destroy that demon too. At this challenge of his wife Ram collected his whole army and the army of all his allies and started for Shatdweep, the abode of this new demon with one thousand hands. This new Ravan was a powerful demon. When attacked he discharged three magic arrows from his bow. One of these sent all the monkeys to Kishkindha, their place of residence; another sent the army of Vibhishan, who was an ally of Ram and the ruler of Lanka after Ravan's death, back to their region beyond seashore; while the third arrow sent all soldiers of Ram back to Ayodhya, Ram's capital. Ram felt humiliated and then Sita laughingly assumed the form of terrific Kali; she attacked this new Ravan with one thousand heads. After a long fight she killed the demon, drank his blood and began to dance and toss about the limbs of his body.

She was calmed by Shiv. However, this story has not received popular approval.

In the images commonly worshipped Kali is shown as a very black female with four arms. In one hand she has a scymitar, in another the head of a demon which she holds by his hair, the third hand is spread flatly open bestowing a blessing and in the fourth she holds another weapon, usually a spear. She wears two heads of demons in place of ear rings and has a necklace of skulls. Her tongue is blood red and hangs down upon her chin. Blood is also seen streaming from her tongue and upon her body. She is shown standing with one foot on the breast of Shiv and the other rests on his thigh.

Animal sacrifice is done before Kali to please her and she is the favourite goddess of the dacoits, who believe that they will be saved of all dangers by the grace of Kali.

At Kali Ghat near Calcutta is the most celebrated image of Kali. Other forms of Kali are Chamunda, Shamshan Kali (goddess of the cremation ground), Bhadra Kali, Ugra Chandi, Bheem Chandi, Siddheshwari, and Sheetla (the goddess of small-pox). People also worship her to protect their children from dreaded diseases and

their homes form ill omens.

Chamunda—As this name of Durga implies she killed two demons, Chanda and Munda. From the forehead of Durga sprang a goddess of jet black complexion, robed in the hide of an elephant, with a garland of dead corpses. With red hot eyes and a long tongue she uttered a big shout and jumped upon the two demons. After this, the goddess Durga was also named as Chamunda or Chamundi.

Durga, in fact, is the goddess most widely worshipped throughout India in various ways and under various names.

Durjaya (*unconquerable*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of the god Buddhakapala.

Dvipakumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of *bhavanavasi* (dwelling in places). They are of youthful appearance and associated with rain and thunder.

Dyaus Pitar (*heaven father*)

Origin Hindu (Vedic) India]. Creator god.

Known period of worship circa 1500 BC or earlier until present.

Synonyms the Sanskrit dyaus is derived from the Indo-European root which also gives Deus (Roman); Zeus (Greek); Tyr (German), etc.

Centre (s) of cult none specific.

Art references none.

Literary sources Rg-veda and other Vedic texts.

Dyaus pitar is a creator god associated with the goddess Prthivi; the primordial couple are normally addressed as Dyavaprthivi. Between them they created the rest of the Vedic pantheon, placed heaven and earth in conjunction with one another and generally preserved the cosmic order. Dyaus is overshadowed and superseded by the rain god Indra in later Hindu tradition, possibly

because he was brought into India by the Aryan settlers from the north who had been used to a cold, bleak culture and who needed a supreme demonstration relevant to a hot, dry environme.

E

Ekanetra *(one-eyed)*

Minor deity, Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of emancipated vidyesvaras (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva. Virtually identical with Ekarudra, but with a single eye.

Ekarudra

Minor deity. Hindu (Epic and Puranic), One of a group of emancipated *vidyesvaras* (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva. Virtually identical with Ekanetra, but with normal eyes.

Ellaman (*lady of the boundary*)

Goddess of passage. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. A goddess guarding boundaries of villages and fields. One of the *navasakti* or astral deities. Also Ellaiyamman.

G

Gaganaganja (*treasury of ether*)

God. Buddhist. One of a group of *bodhisattvas* (*buddha-designates*). Colour: yellow, red or gold. Attributes: blue lotus, book, jewel, lotus and wishing tree in a vase.

Gajavahana

God. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). A form of Skanda who has an elephant as a vehicle. Mainly from southern India. Attributes: cockerel and spear.

Gal Bapsi (*'hook' god*)

Local god. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. Worshipped particularly by the Bhils. To expiate sins, the penitent thrusts a hook into his back and is suspended from it on the day when the sun enters Aries.

Ganapati (*lord of hosts*)

1. God. Hundu (Puranic). The more commonly recognized name of the elephant god Ganesa, particularly favoured in western India.

2. God. Buddhist (Mahayana). The name of a deity influenced by the Hindu god Ganesa. Depicted riding upon a rat or muse and carrying an assortment of attributes.

Ganapatihrdaya (*the heart of Ganapati*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). *The Sakti* of Ganpati.

Gandha (*odour*)

Goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. In Lamaism one of the group of *mataras* (mothers). Colour; green. Attribute: conch with sandalwood resin.

Gandhari (*of Ghandhara*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *sasanadevatas* headed by the goddess Sarasvati. May also be a *vidyadevi.*

Gandha Tara (*fragrance-Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: red. Attribute: conch with sandal word resin.

Ganesh (*lord of hosts*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) [India]. God of wisdom and prudence.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD onwards until present.

Synonyms Ganapati.

Centre (s) of cult none specific.

Art references sculptures generally bronze but also stone. Reliefs. Literary sources late *Mahabharata* recensions and Brihaddharma-*Purana* etc.

Ganesh is god of wisdom and art, a benign deity generally assumed to offer help when invoked to overcome difficulties. He may have originated as a fertility god and as *yaksa* (local forest deity). His father is Siva. His mother, Parvati, is said to have created him from the scurf of her skin. He is depicted in human form with an elephant's head (or, less frequently, up to five heads) and a trunk (which removes obstacles), sometimes bearing one tusk, on a stout or obese body (which contains the universe). He has four arms which can carry a large number of attributes but particularly a shell, a discus, a mace and a water-lily. His sacred animal is the bandicoot. He is called upon before going on a journey, moving house or opening a new business.

According to one legend his elephant head was gained after his

mother had put him outside the house to guard the doorstep while she took a bath. He barred the way to his father whereupon Siva indvertently decapitated him. His mother vowed to secure a head for him from the first passing creature, which happened to be an elephant. Another account suggests that Parvati took Ganesh to show him off to the gods but that Sani (Saturn) burned his head to ashes and the elephant's head was provided to save his life by a compassionate Visnu.

Ganesh's great popularity results in frequent appearance in temples devoted to other Hindu deities. Sculptures are sometimes painted red. He is also a common household guardian made popular by his gentle nature.

Ganesh, commonly known and easily recognised as the Elephant-God, is one of the most popular deities of the Hindu pantheon. Before every undertaking — be it laying of the foundation of house, or opening of a shop or beginning any other work, blessings of Lord Ganesh are invoked by worshipping him first.

Ganesh has many names. The main ones are Ganapati (lord of the tribe or attendants), Vighnesvara (controller of all obstacles), Vinayak (the prominent leader), Gajanana (elephant-faced), Gajadhipati (Lord of elephants), Gajanana (elephant-faced), Gajadhipati (Lord of elephants), Lambkarn (long-eared), Lambodar (pendant-bellied) and Ekadant (having one tusk).

Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiv and goddess Parvati (Shiva's consort). The story connected with his birth and having an elephant's head is an interesting episode of Hindu mythology. One one occasion when Parvati was going to take her bath, she, for reasons of privacy and protection, created Ganesh from her sweat and scurf and asked him to keep guard at her apartments. Shiv, returning after his journey, sought admission in the house. Ganesh, unware of his identity refused the entry. Shiv was enraged and he cut off Ganesh's head. Hearing the scuffle Parvati appeared and tearfully explained that the victim was their offspring.

On hearing the sad news Shiv ordered his attendants to look around

and bring back the head of a child whose mother might be sleeping with her back towards it. Only one she-elephant was found sleeping in the posture and thus the severed head of the cub-elephant was brought to Shiv. Shiv fixed this head onto his son's shoulers.

Another legend accounting for Ganesh's elephant-head is that one day Parvati, proud of the handsome face of her son, asked Shani (Saturn) to have a look at the child. She completely forgot about the disastrous effects of Shani's glance. When Shani looked, the child's head was burnt to ashes. Brahma (the creator of the universe) advised Parvati in distress to replace the head with the first she could find and the child would come to life. The first one to be found was an elephant, and this way Ganesh acquired the head of an elephant.

Another myth is tha once Shiv slew Aditya, the son of sage, though later restored him to life again. At this outrage, Kashyap, one of the seven great Rishis, doomed Shiv's son to lose his head. When he did lose it, the head of Indra's elephant was used to replace it. Still another version states that on one occasion after Parvati had bathed, the water was thrown into the Ganges and drunk by the elephant-headed goddess Malini who gave birth to a baby with four arms and five elephant heads. The river-goddess Ganga claimed him, but Shiv declared him to be Parvati's son, reduced his five heads to one and enthroned him as the 'Remover of obstacles' (Vighnesvara).

The Mythical explanations of Ganesh's solitary tusk (Ekdanta) also make an interesting study. The most popular legend represents Parsuram (another incarnation of God with an axe as his weapon) as once coming to Mount Kailash, the abode of Shiv, the father of Ganesh. He was on a friendly visit to Shiv, who was sound as sound asleep at the time. Ganesh opposed the entrance of the visitor to the inner apartments. A hotworded wrangle ensued, which culminated in a fight. Initially ganesh and the advantage in the duel. He seized Parsuram with his trunk and gave him a swift twirl, which left him sick and senseless. Affer recovering, Parsuram threw his axe at Ganesh. As it happened this exe was given by Shiv to Parsuram as a gift, recognising this as his own father's weapon,

Ganesh recived it with all humility on one of his tusks, which was immediately severed. Hence Ganesh has but one tusk and is known as the single-tusked. The other story is that on one occasion, the moon and the twenty-seven asterisms (nakstras) laughed at Ganesh's pot belly. In great rage he broke off one of his tusks and threw it at the moon which gradually became dark due to the wound.

Ganesh is depicted with having four arms. These symbolise him as the universal ruler establishing four categories of beings, viz., firstly those who can live only in water, secondly those who can live in water and earth, thirdly those who can live only on earth and lastly those who can fly in the air. Moreover it is also Ganesh, who instituted the four castes and four Vedas. One hymn in Sri Bhagavat Tathva, an ancient scripture, says: 'In heaven this child will establish the perdominance of gods, on earth that of men, in the nether world that of the anti-gods and serpents. He causes the four principles of the elements to move and is therefore four armed. In one hand he is shown to have a shell, in another a discus, in the third a club or a sweet cake and in the fourth a water lily.'

The vehicle of Ganesh is a mouse. As rats generally succeed in gnawing their way through every obstruction, the rat symbolises this god's ability to destroy every obstacle. Being an elephant he passes through the thickest of wild growth in a forest, uproots and tears to smithereens the the thickest trees hindering his path and fells out whatever comes in his way whild drilling holes like a mouse he can also slip throught the narrowest of spaces and thickest of the walls. Moreover mouse is deemed to be the master of inside everythings. The all-pervading Atman(suol) is the mouse that lives in the hole called Intellect, within the heart of every being. It hides itself behind the inscrutable shape of illusion.

The legend about Ganesh having preference over all other gods establishes his sharpness of intellect. There was a keen competition amongst all gods to gain the first place of worship amongst the laity. It was decided that the god, who will return first after traversing the whole universe shall be declared the winner. All gods and goddesses ran on their fast vehicles. Ganesh with his

pot-bellied body and mouse's vehicle could never hope to compete. He took a round of his parents, Shiv and Parvati, and just sat there at the starting point. He was declared the winner because one who goes round his parents and touches their feet traverses the whole universe. Since then Ganesh is always worshipped first and every other god takes a back seat. Another legend says that when Parvati saw an elephant's head being fixed on her son's body, she burst into tears and could not be soothed. To pacify her Brahma announced that amongst the worship of all the gods, that of Ganesh should for ever bear the first preference.

Ganesh has got two wives, one named Siddhi (Sucess) and the other named Riddhi (Prosperity). One who pleases the Lord automatically comes in the good books of his two wives. Ganesh, the embodiment of wisdom, is also depicted as a scribe to whom sage Vyasa dictated the Mahabharata. He is accepted as the god of learming and the patron of letters.

In modern age Ganesh is regarded as the personfication of those qualities which surmount all difficulties. He is the typical lord of success in life and its accompaniments of good living, prosperity and peace. Not only is Ganesh thus honoured in religious ceremonies, but in almost all civil concerns too his blessings are sought. At the head of letters, in opening pages of account books, at the entrance gate of a house and at the door of a shop, salutation to Ganesh, drawing his image or his symbol is deemed to be auspicious and a guarantee for progress and prospertiy. His numerous images and shrines can be seen throughout India. In all ceremonies (except funeral rites) Ganesh is first invoked. He is revered by most Hindus, whether followers of Shiv or Vishnu.

Ganesh was born on the fourth day of the month of Bhadrapad or Bhadon, the sixth month of the Hindu lunar calendar. Although worship of Ganesh is widespread all over India, in south and in Maharashtra the people are particularly attached to this god. The main features of the festivities are the buying or making a clay of Ganesh, worshipping it in the house or a community centre and then taking it in a procession to be immersed in a river, lake or sea. The image is taken in a palanquin or on head.

Ganesh represents the unity of the Small Being, the man, with the great Being, the elephant. It is the blending of microcosm with macrocosm, of drop with the ocean and of individual soul with divinty.

Ganga

River goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Guardian deity of the Ganges. The elder daughter of Himavan and Mena, she is the sister of Parvati and the consort of Visnu and Agni. She is also the second consort of siva. Ganga is regarded as a symbol of purity and is frequently depicted with Brahma washing the raised foot of Visnu Trivikrama. According to tradition she was a heavenly river brought to earth and caught by Siva in his hair to soften the shock of her fall. She rides on a fish or water monster. Colour: white. Attributes: fly whisk, lotus and water jar.

The Gang is considered to be a goddess and is supposed to be one of the consorts of Lord Siva. River Gangas, popularly known as Mother Ganges, is the mother of Bhishma, the great hero of the Mahabharata. Hinduism in its infancy used to worship river Ganges and the practice still holds. The Ganges is known as the river of heaven and is said to have flowed through heaven before she agreed to come down to earth. According to mythology, she was brought down from heaven by a king named Bhagirata, in order to purify the ashes of his ancestors. It is said that Mother Gangas came down reluctantly and she flowed through the matted locks of Lord Siva in order to break down her force, otherwise the earth would have been shattered by her direct impact. Some Hindus belive that the indwelling spir causes water in the Gangas to move. River Gangas comes roaring down the Indian plains, but the source of the Gangas popu larly known as Gangotri, is a silent lake. Mythology states that if a dying man takes a drop of Gangas water, he is assured of heaven when he dies. There are so many myths about the Ganges and those myths are passed on front generation to generation. As per mythology, bathing in the Gangas is supposed to wash away all one's sins. Since the river contains a lot of minerals, it has many medicinal qualities. The total length of the Gangas is 1,557 miles.

This goddess representing the holy river of Ganges is shown as a white woman, wearing a white crown, sitting on the sea animal crocodile, holding in her right hand a water lily and in her left hand a lute.

Rig Veda mention the name of Ganga only twice but in the later period of Puranic age Ganga assumed great importance as a goddess. The legend says that she was produced from the sweat of Vishnu's feet, which Brahma caught and filled in his *kamandal* (vessel-container).

The story of Ganga's coming from heaven to eath is a famous mythological tale. Sagar, a ledgendary king of Ayodhya had no children. He performed long and arduous penances as a result of which he was promised the birth of sixty thousand children. He did get these sons and when they grew up king Sagar resolved to perform the *Ashvamegh yagya* (the horse-sacrifice ritual). Indra the lord of heavens was alarmed and feared that Sagar would become very strong and dethrone him.

Indra descended to the earth and stealthily carried away the horse, which he placed in *patal* (the subterranean region) just near the famous sage Kapil, who was sitting there in deep meditation. The sixty thousand sons of Sagar, after searching that horse on the whole of earth, dig a hole and reached *patal*. There they found the horse standing near a sage who was sitting with eyes closed in meditation. They thought that he was the thief and began beating the sage Kapil, who awoke at this and in anger reduced all the princes to ashes.

The wandering sage Narad informed Sagar about the fate of his sixty thousand sons. King Sagar prayed to sage Kapil for relief, and was advised that it he could somehow bring the goddess Ganga from heavens on the earth and if the ashes were washed with her water, their salvation would come. Sagar gave the throne to the one surviving son of his and went to forest for prayers but perished in his efforts. So also his son, who too sacrificed his life as a penance after giving throne to his son (Sagar's great grand-son), named Dalip.

Dalip had no son from any of his two wives. With god Shiv's blessings he did get a son named Bhagirath who was deformed. When this boy became young a sage blessed him and he turned into a healthy and handsome prince. Bhagirath now addressed prayers regularly to different gods for the restoration of his sixty thousand relations suffering on acount of a curse. He performed severe penance and prayed earnestly for a very long time. Both god Shiv and goddess Ganga were ultimately propitiated. As Ganga had to fall from heaven to earth, Bhagirath was afraid lest the earth be crushed by her fall.

Ganga swept down in three great instalments and Shiv standing on Mountain Himalaya, caught Ganga in his matted hair to mitigate the impact. At lenght Shiv allowed a part of Ganga to fall on earth and Bhagirath blowing the conch given to him by god Vishnu led Ganga to seas. Later she was taken to *patal* (nether region) and so all the sixty thousand sons of Sagar were purified and saved from doom.

On way to the nether region what happened to Ganga is no less interesting. Accompanying Bhagirath Ganga asked him at what spot his sixty thousand relations were lying whom she was to deliver. As he could not inform her the location Ganga before entering the sea divided herself into one hundred streams so as to ensure the salvation of the cursed wherever they might be lying. When Ganga was thus falling from heaven on the earth, the gods prayed to Brahma that they also needed Ganga in the heavens to wash off their sins. At this Brahma assured them that a part of Ganga would remain in heaven too. Thus the goddess Ganga is called Mandakenee in heavens, Ganga on earth and Bhagirathi in patal.

This goddess bears a great importance in holy books. Purans declare that the sight, the name and the touch of Ganga takes away all sins and that bathing in Ganga bestows blessings of the highest order. Not only those who bathe in Ganga obtain *Swarg* (heaven), but also those whose bones, hair, etc., are left in the river. All the land over which Ganga flows is to be regarded as hallowed ground.

The cremation of a dead body at the banks of Ganga and throwing

the remains in its water even when the dead bodies are burnt elsewhere is thought propitious. It is preferred that the bones of the deceased be brought to Ganga and cast into the holy river. It is said that this leads to salvation of the deceased.

A well-known mythological story concerning Ganga is given in Mahabharat. The father of mighty Bheeshma, named Shantanu fell deeply in love with Ganga who agreed to marry him on condition that he would never criticise her nor oppose her any action which included the killing of their children. If he broke this condition she would immediately leave him. They both started living happily and seven sons were born to them. Ganga threw each child at birth into the river saying that this was for Shantanu. When the eighth child was born and she was ready to drown it, Shantanu forbade her. The life of this child named Bheeshma was thus saved but Ganga left the prince for ever.

Hindus particularly choose this river for holy rituals because the merits of works performed here become manifold in their results. Another name of Ganga is Vishnupadi, the one flowing from the foot of god Vishnu. Vishnu Puran says that Ganga encloses Brahma's great city situated on Mount Meru and then divides into four mighty rivers flowing in four directions.

Gangajal, the water of Ganga, is held so sacred that with this in hand no Hindu dare speak untruth. Those who die within specified limits around Ganga, called Gangakshetra (the land of Ganga), are believed to go the heavenly world and all their sins washed off.

The other sacred rivers for Hindus are Yamuna, Saryu, Sindhu, Godavari, Kaveri, Narmada, Gomti and Brahmputra.

Garuda (*the devourer*)

1. Archaic sun god and divine vehicle. Hindu (Vedic). Originally depicted as a solar *deity*, Garuda evolved into a bird-like human hybrid who became the deified mount of Visnu. Also a chief adversary of *nagas* (snake-like demons), which he devours. In early depictions Garuda has a parrot's beak. Said to have been born from an egg, the son of Vinata and Kasyapa. Epithets include Amrtaharana, Garutman, Tarksya. Attributes: conch, club, lotus and nectar, but may also bear the attributes of Visnu.

2. Mount or *vahana* of Vajrapani. Buddhist. Attributes: flower, horse-head, noose, skin and staff. Three-eyed and three-headed.

Garuda with the head and wings of eagle and sometimes with the rest of his body like that of a man, is called the king of birds and he is also the carrier of god Vishnu.

Garuda is the subject of numerous mythological stories in Mahabharat and other Purans. Vinita, the wife of Kashyap, the progenitor of gods and men, laid an egg and become the mother of this bird-god. As soon as Garuda was born, his body expanded and touched the sky, his eyes were like lightining; the mountains trembled with the spread of his wings. It is stated that as a result of a dispute between Vinita, the mother of Garuda, and Kudroo, the mother of serpents, a continuous enmity has been going on between the two and Garuda is on the look out to devour all the serpents he can find.

The story of his becoming the carrier of god Vishnu is related thus. Garuda with his great strength surmounted many dangers. At last one day Garuda seized the moon and concealed it under his wings. This worried all the gods in heavens and under the leadership of Indra the gods attacked Garuda He overcame all gods but could not conquer Vishnu. However, when Garuda relented god Vishnu made the bird immortal and permitted him the honour of being Vishnu's carrier.

Garuda is also said to have stolen Amrit (ambrosia) from the gods in order to purchase his mother's freedom from the thraldom of Kadru, the mother of a thousand powerful manyheaded serpents. Indra discovered this theft and fought a fierce battle with Garuda. The amrit was recovered but the thunderbolt of Indra has smashed in the battle.

Garuda is identified with the all consuming sun's ray and popular belief credits him with the power to cure those suffering from snake bite. The mantra (hymn) that is effective in such cases reads thus, "Om Tarakishya (Garuda), case down my enemies, trample the diseases and venom that might invade me". The emerald stone traditionally deemed as the anti-dote of poison, is also associated

with Garuda.

Garud is also known by another name of Vinayak which name he shares with god Ganesh. Thus this god-bird is thought to be the remover or destroyer of obstacles.

Garuda is not separately worshipped widely as an independent god; he is worshipped together with Vishnu. His image is placed near Vishnu in temples and in pictures he is shown as carrying Vishnu in the skies on its back.

The elder brother of Garuda is called Urud or Aruna and he is the charioteer of Surya, the sun god. The image of this bird is shown as that of a man without thighs.

The name of Garud's son is Jatayu. This bird tried to rescue Sita, when Ravan was fleeing after kidnapping her. Ravan fights him and wounds him fatally. Ram himself cremated this bird after death and sent it to heaven.

Gauri (*whitish brilliant*)

1. Goddess. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic), Consort of the god Varuna, said to have been created at the churning of the ocean of milk. An epithet of Parvati as a goddess of the corn. Also a *sakti* of Mahesvara, a minor aspect of siva. Her attendant animal is a lion or a wolf. Attributes: fish, forest garland, image of Ganesh, lotus, mirror, rosary, trident and water jar. Three-eyed. Also Varuni.

2. Goddess. Buddhist. One of eight *gauris* of terrible appearance. Attributes; head and noose.

3. Messenger goddess. Jain [India]. a *sasanadevata.* Also one of sixteen *vidyadevis* or goddesses of learning headed by Sarasvati. Colour; white. Attribute: a hook.

Note : Gauri-Tara is a distinct minor Buddhist Mahayana goddess.

Gautama Buddha

See Buddha.

Gayatri

Personification of a hymn. Hindu. The name of a popular hymn in

the *Rg Veda*, dedicated to the sun. Also the name of one possibly the second, of the consorts of Brahma. See Sarasvati.

Gayatri is in fact the name applied to one of the most well-known Vedic hymn consisting of twenty four syllables. This hymn is addressed to god Surya (sun) as the supreme generative force. Being translated this hymn means "We meditate on that glorious light of the divine Surya (Sun), may he, the lord of light, illuminate our minds". It is ordained that repeating this hymn again and again leads to salvation. One who desires to attain heaven should recite it a thousand times each day. A man of the upper caste, who daily repeats the Gayatri hymn 3000 times for one month shall be freed from guilt, however great.

Gayatri later came to be personified as a goddess. She is shown having five heads and is usually seated within a lotus. She is another consort of Brahma. According to the myth one day Saraswati was late to arrive at the time when Brahma was to perform his sacrifices to gods. Brahma became very angry because her consort's presence was indispensable to complete the ceremonies. Brahma asked the priest to fetch him any woman and wed him to her at the spot. Just in the neighbourhood was found a very lovely shepherdess. In reality she was no other person than this Vedic hymn of Gayatri incarnated in the shape of that beautiful girl. Brahma immediately married that girl and kept her as his other wife together with Saraswati.

The five heads of Gayatri represent the four Vedas of ancient Aryans and the remaining one represents the Almighty Lord himself. In her ten hands she holds all the symbols of Lord Vishnu including mace, lotus, axe, conch, sudarshan, lotus, etc. One of the sacred texts explicitly reads: "The Gayatri is Brahma, the Gayatri is Vishnu, the Gayatri is Shiva, the Gayatri is Vedas".

The importance of this hymn is accepted by all sects of Hindus. Even the Arya Samajists, who do not believe in the worship of images and idols, proclaim this hymn as the most sacred one and in every prayer of theirs repeat the holy mantra to achieve success as well as salvation.

Ghantakarna (*ears like bells*)

God of healing. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). An attendant of Siva, worshipped as a guardian against diseases of the skin. Attributes: bell with noose and hammer.

Note there is also a poorly defined goddess Ghantakarni.

Ghantapani (*bell in hand*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). One of the group of dhyanibodhisattva (meditation buddhas). An emanation of Vajrasattva. Colour: white. Attribute: a bell.

Ghasmari (*voracious*)

Goddess of terrifying appearance. Buddhist. One of a group of eight *gauris*. Colour; green. Attributes: staff with bell.

Ghentu

Minor god. Hindu. known in northern India as the god who 'sends the itch'.

Gita

Mother goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of *astamataras* (mothers). Colour: red, Attributes: Indian gong and lute.

Gods of Hinduism

As per the Christian Bible, everything came from the *Word* and the Word was God. Similarly, we in Hinduism believe that everything came from *Aum* (Om) and *Aum* is God. From *Aum* came Mother God and the Godhead that is divided into three which is popularly known as the *Trinity. They are Brahma (God of Creation*), Vishnu (God of Preservation) and *Siva* (*God of Annihilation*).

When each of these three Gods takes human or any other form we call that an Avatar. Vishnu's popular Avatars are Rama and Krishna. Vishnu has 10 Avatars altogether. They are: Fish, Tortoise, Boar, Nara-simha (Man-Lion), Vamana (Dwarf), Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki. The Kalki Avatar is yet to come. It will come at the end of Kali Yuga, when the

GODS OF HINDUISM

BRAHMAN
(THE UNDEFINABLE, TIMELESS REALITY)
(Similar to TAO of Taoism)
IMMOVABLE, INCONCEIVABLE, UNBORN, NON-BEING

AUM (OM)
(THE VIBRATORY ASPECT OF BRAHMAN - THE WORD)
(Similar to AMEN and AMIN - The WORD of the Bible)

TRINITY or TRIMURTI

LORD BRAHMA (GOD OF CREATION)	LORD VISHNU (GOD OF PRESERVATION)	LORD SIVA (GOD OF ANNIHILATION)

MOTHER GODDESS

GODDESS SARSWATHI (GODDESS OF KNOWLEDGE)	GODDESS LAKSHMI (GODDESS OF WEALTH)	GODDESS PARVATHI (GODDESS OF POWER)

GODS OF NATURE

SURYA	SOMA	VAYU	AGNI	VARUNA	DEVENDRA
SUN	MOON	AIR	FIRE	WATER	GOD OF HEAVEN

CHILDREN OF LORD SIVA: GANAPATHI, SUBRAMANIYAN

AVATARS - ALL 22 AVATARS OF LORD VISHNU, INCLUDING BUDDHA

AVATARS AS GODDESS: LIKE KALI(DHURGA) & SAKTI

JOINT AVATARS OF LORD VISHNU AND LORD SIVA - AYYAPPAN OF KERALA

MONKEY GOD - HANUMAN

SNAKES GODS - VASUKI, ANANDAN

OTHER GODS & GODDESSES OF HINDUISM

THIRTY THREE GODS OF RIG-VEDA: 8 VASUS, 11 RUDHAS, 12 ADITYAS
DYAUS-THE SKY GOD &
PRITHVI - THE GODDESS OF EARTH.

RIG-VEDIC GODDESS: ADITI (incarnated as DEVAKI-mother of Krishna).

SCRIPTURAL GODS: ANILA (49 gods associated with VAYU - the wind god); ADITYA (another group of gods not connection with sun god); ABHASVARA (64 gods); GANA (the servants of Lord Ganapathi); GUHYAKA (servants of Kubera); RUDRA (the servants of god Rudra - the Dravidian god);VASUS (8 children of river Ganges, Bhishma was one of them), VALAKHILYA (sons of Rishi Kratu); VINAYAKA (companions of Lord Ganesha). There are still a lot of scriptural gods described in Hindu Puranas.

SERVANTS OF LORD SIVA: like BHAIRAVA

RISHIS - ALL RISHIS LIKE VASISTA, ATRI, AGASTHYA, PARASARA, BRIGHU, NARADA, BRIHASPATHI ETC

WIVES OF RISHIS: ARE TREATED AS GODDESSES LIKE ANUSUYA (ATRI) AND LOPA MUDRA (AGASTHYA) and ARUNDHATI (VASISHTA)

GANDHARVAS - CELESTIAL BEINGS

APSARASES - CELESTIAL FEMALE BEINGS LIKE URVASI, MENAKA ETC

MINOR GODDESSES: YOGINIS (attendants of Dhurga); DAKINIS (female imps who feed on human flesh); BHAIRAVIS (female servants of Siva), GRAHIS (witches who attack newborn babies)

PLANETARY GODS: ALMOST ALL PLANETS ARE GODS LIKE, MOON, JUPITER, SATURN, MERCURY, VENUS ETC

GOD OF WEALTH: KUBERA
GOD OF BIRDS: GARUDA
GOD OF MOUNTAINS: HIMAVAN
GOD OF SNAKES: ANATHAN
GODDESS OF RIVERS: GANGES
GOD OF FOUR-LEGGED ANIMALS: NANDI - the bull of Lord Siva
GODS WHO PROTECT FIELDS: KSHETRAPALAS
GODS WHO PROTECT GATES: DVARAPALS

GODS OF VILLAGE: GRAMADEVATAS
GODDESSES OF SOUTH: ELAMMA, TIPAMMA ETC
GODDESS OF BOMBAY: MAHAMABA-Bombay got the name from this goddess
GODDESS OF SMALL-POX: SITALA

DEPARTED SAINTS: ALMOST ALL OF THEM ARE TREATED AS GODS.

PROPHETS SUCH AS JESUS CHRIST, MOHAMMAD, MOSES, SUFIS ETC

TOTAL: 330,000,003 GODS - A FIGURE MIGHT BE AN APPROXIMATE CALCULATION, SOME HOW ASSOCIATED WITH THE 33 GODS OF RIG-VEDA.

whole world goes under floods (deluge).

Siva meaning "the Auspicious One" is a *personification of destruction as well as the destruction of Ego.* He is usually represented as having the river Ganga running through his matted locks and snakes around his neck.

Consorts of all these gods are known as goddesses. They are *Saraswati*—wife of Brahma as well as *Goddess of Knowledge, Lakshmi*—wife of Vishnu as well as *Goddess of Prosperity,* Parvati— wife of Siva as well as *Goddess of Power.*

Since Hinduism started as a slowly developed thinking process, it has a large number of gods.

Many of them represent powers of nature like Vayu (Air), Varuna (Water), Agni (Fire), Aditya (Sun), etc. and also other semi-gods like, Ananta (Serpent god), Hanuman (Monkey god), Indra (god of heaven), Yama (god of death).

Lord Siva has two sons and both are gods. Subramanya is the second son and he is God of Astrology. Ganapati or Ganesha is his first son, who has the face of an elephant and is described as "He who removes all obstacles". Siva actually has two more sons. One is Hanuman (Monkey god) and the other is Sri Ayyappan. Hanuman is also known as the son of Vayu, since Parvati (consort of Siva) transferred her pregnancy to the womb of the consort of Vayu, and she delivered Hanuman.

Krishna, the Avatar of Vishnu, is worshipped throughout India in many ways. The actual meaning of Krishna is "The Dark One". Krishna's popular consort's name is Radha.

Buddha, even though an Avatar of Vishnu, is not worshipped much among Hindus. Kali, the Mother God, is worshipped very much in the State of Bengal. The most popular devotee of Kali is Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The notorious tribes of India, *Thugs,* also worshipped Kali, and due to their extreme fanaticism and killing of people as sacrifices to goddess Kali, they were exterminated by the British rulers of India.

Hinduism repeatedly states that there is only one God. The Vedas

call him *Brahman*. The Upanishads explain him by the *Neti-Neti* (Not this-Not this) method. Sometimes God is referred to as *That*, an inanimate object, since no human description can ever do justice to His magnitude. Now coming back to your main question of so many gods, it is quite simple to explain. Ordinary human beings can only grasp a god in human form and they resort to different forms of worship to different dieties, even though they are all actually worshipping one god.

To elaborate further, let us take your mother as an example. You look at her as your beloved mother, who takes care of you; I look at her as my partner in life, with whom I can share everything in life; her father looks at her as a little girl, who still has a lot to learn. See now, there is only one person, but three of us are seeing that person from three different angles. All three of us are right in seeing her differently, although there is only one person. So even if you worship hundreds of gods you are actually worshipping one supreme being, one God. Of course, it is difficult for westerners to digest that ideoloy easily.

In Hinduism, some deities are symbolically considered the rulers or protectors of directions of space. Both the Upanishads and Puranas slightly differ in the configuration of deities who rule different directions of space. Anyway, the most uptodate list is as follows:

Eastern direction is protected by *Indra*, god of heaven. *Western direction* is protected by *Varuna*, god of waters. Northern direction is protected by *Kubera*, god dof wealth. *Southern direction* is protected by *Soman* (Moon). North-Eastern dieection is protected by *Yama*, god of death. North-Eastern direction is protected by Soman (Moon). North-Western direction is protected by Agni, god of fire. South-Western direction is protected by Surya, Sun-god.

I not't think I could ever give you a complete list of all the gods in Hinduism. *Some say that there are at least thirty-three and three-fourth crores* gods in Hinduism.* Even some saints are considered as gods. Again many of the gods worshipped by Hindus have different names in the Vedas. For example, Lord Siva is known as Rudra in the Vedas. The act of worshipping so many gods at the same time is no problem for Hindus, since they believe

that all forms are manifestations of the one God or power.

There are a large rumber of minor gods in Hinduism. They are mostly Gandharvas (celestial beings), Apsaras (celestial females), Devas (attendants of the god of heaven) and Nagas (snakes). All attendants of Lord Siva are also considered as minor gods. Apart from that many departed saints are also worshipped as minor gods.

Nagas (snakes) are children of a saintnamed Kashyapa. According to the *Varaha Purana,* they occupy the three lower worlds, namely *Patala, Atala,* and *Sutala* Of all the Nagas, three are most prominent. They are *Vasuki, Sesha* (*Ananta*) and *Takshaka.* Vasuki is the snake we see crawling around the neck of Lord Siva and in mythology it helped as a rope to churn the ocean of milk, Sesha or Ananta has one thousand heads and it is on this snake that Lord Vishnu sleeps in Vaikunta. Takshaka always gets into trouble and is very vicious. It tried to annihilate Arjuna, the great hero of the *Mahabharata* and at the end of the Mahabharata war, he managed to kill king Parikshit, the last heir of the Pandavas. The Nagas are worshipped in many Hindu temples along with the major and minor gods.

The Upanishads have maintained the existence of one God known as Brahman. The only reference to multiple gods in the Upanishads comes from a conversation in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad between a devotee named Vidagdha Sakalya and Sage Yajnavalkya. The lively conversation is as follows:

"How many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Three thousand three hundred and six," replied

Yajnavalkya.

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Thirty-three," answered Yajnavalkya.

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Six," said the great saint.

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Three".

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajanvalkya?"

"Three".

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Two."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"One and a half."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"ONE", answered the great teacher of Hinduism.

This conversation makes us conclude that even though there are many gods, in reality there is only ONE. One God appears in a thousand different forms to devotees according to the way they perceive that supreme power.

Nataraja is the dancing god of India, who is actually Lord Siva Nataraja is very popular in the west. You may have seen Nataraja statues even in some James Bond movies. *Nata* means Dance and Raja means King. Lord Siva is supposed to be dancing over the demon *Apasmara,* Ignorance - He who makes us forget who we really are, the Ego. Nataraja brings about the destruction of the Ego.

He is also the visible symbol of the Rhythm of the Universe. He is encircled by a ring of flames, symbolishing the vital processes of universal creation. The *Mudras,* hand-expressions of the deity, represent different activities. In one hand Lord Nataraga holds a drum, the symbol of speech, his second hand shows Abhaya Mudra ("Fear not—I will protect you" sign), in the palm of his third hand, he has a tongue of fire as a symbol of destruction and the fourth hand points downward to the uplifted foot. It symbolises the salvation of the devotee.

Hindus worship Lord Siva as *Siva Linga* (phallus and Yoni), as Nataraja (Dancer), as *Dakshinamurthi* (a meditating ascetic), as *Kalyanasundara* (the husband of Parvati), as *Tripurantaka*



(destroyer of demons like Tripura), as *Ardhanarishwara* (half-woman God), as *Bhairava* (the destroyer), as *Maheshwara* (the lord of knowledge), as Hara (the remover of death). Among them Siva Linga is the most common form of image of Lord Siva one will see in most Hindu temples.

"Nandi"? is a bull with milk-white or snow-white colour and is the vehicle of Lord Siva. Its neck is thick and horns are as hard as diamonds. You will see Nandi outside every Siva temple. ***It is the guardian of all four-legged animals.***

It may be surprising to you to hear that Hindus generally do not worship Lord Brahma. The liberation of the soul is connected with

Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva and that may be the reason why Lord Brahma is not worshipped by Hindus. Of course, there are representations of Lord Brahma in most temples and his name is repeated in rituals. The *Skanda Purana* gives a number of reasons whyLord Brahma is not worshipped like Lord Vishnu and Lord Siva. One of the reason is that he was cursed by Lord Siva never to be worshipped by mortals since Lord Brahma once lied to Lord Siva.

Goraknath

Guardian god. Hindu. An *avatara of Siva,* worshipped amongst cow- herders and the founder of the *gorakhnathi* sect in Nepal.

Grahamatrka (*demon mother*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). One of the forms of Vairocana. Attributes: arrow, bow, lotus and staff. Three-headed.

Gramadevata

Generic term for a local tutelary deity. India. Such deities are identified as 'not being served by Brahman priests. Most are goddesses e.g. Camunda, Durga and Kali. Generally they are invoked in small villages where they guard boundaries and fields and are represented by a painted stone, but they are also to be found in larger towns and cities.

Grdhrasya (*face of a vulture*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist.

Grismadevi (*goddess of summer*)

Seasonal goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Also an attendant of Sridevi. Usually accompanied by a yak. Colour: red. Attributes: axe and cup.

Gulsilia Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A *Sakti* who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent, inflicting sickness. Particularly known from Bengal.

Gur-Gyi Megon-Po

God of tents. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. A form of Mahakala usually attended by a man. Colour: blue. Attributes: club, cup and knife.

Guru

The word Guru is so widely used nowadays to the extent of calling someone a "Guru of Wall Street". Most people think that "teacher" is the meaning of the word Guru. But in Hinduism, Guru means God himself.

Only God-realized masters can be called Gurus. Only they have the right to demand unquestioned devotion and surrender of the free will of their followers. One of the essential qualities of a true Guru is Omnipresence.

The majority of the so-called Gurus are merely teachers. No one becomes a Guru by merely studying philosophy and religion and no one can be called a Guru merely because she/he may be an adept in verbal acrobatism.

There is no need for an aspirant fanatically to search for a Guru. *Sage Narade states that all over the world there are hundreds of Gurus, many of them living in spirit and constantly searching for worthy disciples.* So Gurus are easy to get, but it is very difficult to get faithful and obedient disciples. So if one seeks truth, hundreds of Gurus will come and knock at his/her door to deliver it. Swami Vivekananda did not pick his Guru; instead Sri Ramakrishna picked Vivedananda as his disciple. Out of thousands that surrounded him, Jesus Christ chose only 12 disciples and they were just fishermen without and theological knowledge. He did not pick and learned man of that day. There are also instances in the Bible where Jesus had rebuked his disciples for want of enough faith. This again proves the fact that 'the faithful and obedient disciple' is a rare commodity and not the Guru.

Again, as per Hinduism, there are seven living masters known as *Saptha Rishis*, who take care of the world forever. They guide us constantly in our spiritual aspirations. So there is no need to crave for Gurus. What an aspirant has to follow is righteousness and truth alone.

A true Guru is a divine gift to man. No one can become a guru by self-proclamation. Sage Ashtavakra, who is one of the seven ever-living masters of the world, was the Guru of King Janaka and the disciple of the materialistic King Janaka was Sage Suka, the great exponent of Bhakti Yoga, What that shows is that different Gurus exhibit different qualities even though theysucceed one another.

If we change our consciousness, if we desire for God through devotion and by selfless actions, a Guru will definitely come to us. That Guru need not necessarily come in body; he/she can come in spirit also.

It is indeed very difficult to differentiate a true Guru from the multitude of teachers around us. Unluckily, there are many phony Gurus in the world today. An aspirant should be extremely careful in attaching his/her own spiritual aspirations to such phony Gurus, because that could bring about destruction of one's own spiritual life. As such it is better for anyone to pick up a Guru, who is living in spirit rather than living in the body (flesh). The Guru-disciple relationship is a very special relationship in Hinduism and once that relationship is made, there is no breaking away from it. Who is a true Guru? A person who gets agitated and becomes restless and who exhibits emotions is definitely not a Guru. Unless someone is a great seeker of truth, he will not be able to recognise a true Guru, even if that Guru comes to him/her. Christlike masters can pass you by a thousand times, but if you are not communicating in their wavelength, you will never recognize them. All of us are like tike tiny portable transistor radios, and until we tune our spiritual urge properly, we cannot hope to contact Christlike masters. They are close to each of us, but yet they cannot come to us, since we are not functioning on their wavelength. *Again you should know that a Guru need not necessarily come in orange or Kavi robes, he/she can come in any form and in any clothes, even in a three-piece suit.*

Hinduism very clearly states the differences between both words. Thousands know about God and scriptures, but one in a billion realizes God. God. At the same time, history has shown that scriptural knowledge is not a must for God-realization. Hinduism also believes that anyone who seeks the *absolute truth will*

ultimately realize God.

That search for Truth need not necessarily be in tune with Hinduism, it can be through any other true religion. It could be through Self-Dedicated Karma or a duty that one undertakes. For example, the soulds of people like Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, Father Damien and Mother Teresa may be closer to God-realization than thousands of so-called Gurus parading around the world. It is difficult for anyone to say who has attained realization and who has not. A man in Kavi (ochre) robes may sometimes be inferior to a man who sells drugs at New York's Time's Square. With our intelligence we cannot differentiate "who is who". Only Godrealised masters can do that. Christ dis not go after the learned men of the day, but the understanding souls of the day who were on a pedestal, as far as evolution is concerned. By virtue of Karma, they were just fishermen, a very low caste of the time. Just think, Sage Veda Vyasa himself was a son of a woman belonging to the tribe of fishermen and Sage Valmiki was a savage, robbing people in jungles.

H

Halahala (*lord of poison*)

God of poison. Buddhist (Mahayana). A form of Avalokitesvara. Typically seated on a red lotus with the *Sakti* on the left knee. Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, bow, cup, grass, image of Amitabha on crown, lotus, tiger skin and trident. Three-headed and three-eyed.

Hammu Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu Locally worshipped by the Bhils.

Hansa (*goose*)

Minor avatara of Visnu. Hindu (Puranic). Depicted in the form of a goose.

Hanuman (*with large jaws*)

Monkey god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Hanuman attends Rama, one of the incarnations of Visnu, and personifies the ideal and faithful servant. He is the son of Pavana, the god of winds, and is noted for his speed and agility in which context he is often worshipped by young men and athletes. He leads a mythical forest army of monkeys, and is depicted as a monkey with a long tail. He takes a major role in the *Ramayana* epic searching for, rescuing, the goddess Sita who has been captured by the demon Ravana. He may appear trampling on the goddess of Lanka [Sri Lanka]. Worshipped particularly in southern India but more generally in villages. colour: red. Attributes: bow, club, mane, rock and staff. May appear five-headed.

Hanuman, the well-known monkey god, can be seen in temples throughout the country. In some temples his image is set up alone standing with a mace in the right hand or sitting in a devotional posture before the images of Ram and Sita. He is considered to be the god of power and strength, who remained a celebate through his whole life. He is worshipped as being the greatest devotee of Ram, who loves Hanuman the most.

Hanuman's osther names are Hanumat and pavan-Sut. He is the son of Vayu, the lord of winds and Anjana, the female seduced by Vayu. along with Ram, Hanuman is invariably worshipped and he is the most favoured deity of wrestlers and grapplers. Tuesday is the sacred day on which lacs of Hindus worship Hanuman and pray to him for strength and prosperity.

Hanuman's deeds of bravery and feats of valour are related in great detail in the Ramayan and also scantily in a few other religious books like Mahabharat and Agni Puran. This god is described as having a short thick neck, a round red face, sharp white fangs, a mane like *Ashoka* flowers, a tail like Indra's banner and ability to expand until he could be as large as a mountain or to contract until he could be as small as a fly.

So many interesting myths surround this god. Hanuman, when quite young, saw the rising sun; he thought it to be a ripe fruit, jumped up to it and seizing it put the sun into his mouth. All the gods and goddesses, for fear that if swallowed the sun the whole world would perish, prayed to him to spit out the sun. Hanuman agreed and the world was saved from complete darkness. When only ten years old, Hanuman could lift the fills sixteen or twenty miles in circumference and throw these like stones. Once swallowed by a monster, he expanded his body and the monster had to vomit this god out.

On another occasion when one monster put Hanuman in his mouth, this god transformed himself into a very small figure and emerged out of this monster's big ear. This story runs thus: When Hanuman was on his flight to Ravan's Lanka on his job assigned by Ram, a female-demon named Surasa saw that this monkey was going to harm her near relative, Ravan. So in an effort to save her cousin she

swallowed Hanuman bodily. To avoid this Hanuman continued expanding his body, while she continued stretching her mouth till it was a hundred leagues wide. Suddenly Hanuman shrank his body and within seconds he became thumb-sized. Taking the female-demon by surprise he darted forward and came out through her right ear.

The scriptures state that 'his form is as vast as a mountain' and as tall as a gigantic tower. His complexion is yellow and glowing like molten gold. His face is as red as the brightest ruby; while his enormous tail spreads out to an interminable length. He stands on a lofty rock and roars like thunder. He leaps into the air and flies among the clouds with a rushing noise, while the ocean waves are roaring and splashing below. Ramayan further says, "The chief of monkeys is a perfect being. No one can equal him in learning of *Shastras* and in comprehending the meaning and sense of scriptures. In all sciences and in the rules of austerity, he youth rivals the preceptor of the gods. Hanuman is the ninth author of grammar."

Hanuman became the greatest and the most faithful helper of Ram in his campaign against Ravan. When sent as Ram's envoy Hanuman was given a ring to convince Sita that he was truly her husband's messenger. With a formidable leap he crossed the sea and reached Lanka. He succeeded in meeting Sita and brought her news back to Ram.

Ravan's guards, while he was in Lanka, had succeeded in catching Hanuman, who was then brought to the demonking's court. At Ravan's command his tail was set on fire and with his burning tail Hanuman created a great havoc in Lanka. When Ram's younger brother was lying unconscious in the battlefiled and the herb that could cure him was not available, he came forward to bring that herb from Himalayas. In the hurry when Hanuman could not trace that magical herb, he lifted the complete hill and flew to bring the same to battlefield. The arrow that had wounded in the night with it could not recover if the cure was not obtained before day-light. Hanuman knew this and was determined to bring it before the sun rose. The powerful Ravan compelled the sun to arise on the

mountain at midnight. Hanuman, being enraged at the conspiracy, leaped up and seizing sun's chariot placed the blazing god under his arm and put the mountain on his head. Only after the application of the desired herb on the wound of Lakshman, Hanuman permitted the sun to depart.

Hanuman accompanied Ram on his return to Ayodhya and there he was given by Ram the blessings of perpetual and deathless existence. He was so much devoted to Ram and Sita that once he even tore up his chest with claws and showed that images of Ram and his wife were very much in his heart.

He is one of the most popular deities amongst Hindus and his pictures can be seen in almost every Hindu home.

Hara (*destroyer*)

Epithet of Siva. Hindu (Puranic). Also one of the ekadasrudras (eleven rudras).

Hardaul

Plague god. Hindu. A locally worshipped deity known particularly in Bundelkhands, northern India, as a protector against cholera and considered to have been an historical figure who died in 1627 AD. Also a wedding god.

Hare Krishnas

From the age of Brahmanas, Hindus believed that creation came from the word *Aum* and the Godhead is Trinity, with the Mother Goddess apart from Trinity. The trinity is Lord Brahma (Lord of Creation), Lord Vishnu (Lord of Preservation) and Lord Siva (Lord of Annihilation). The Mother Goddess is known as Sakti. *Three main groups arose in Hinduism, namely Vaishnavites (those who worship Vishnu), Saivites (those who worship Siva), Saktites (those who worship the Mother Goddess).* Three scriptures associated with those groups were developed, namely, Vaishnava Agamas, Saiva Agamas, and Sakta Agamas. The Sakta Agamas are also known as Tantras.

Some historians state that the Vaishnava movement degenerated in time due to constant battles with Saivites as well as due to the *Deva*

Dasi System, where women from good families were used as temple prostitutes under the guise of serving Lord Vishnu and practising Tantras. The emergence of Buddhism as the prime religion among people due to Emperor Ashoka also contributed to the downfall of Vaishnavism. In recent Vedanta Swami Prabhupada revived the ancient Vaishnava movement as "The International Society for Krishna Consciousness" or "Iskon". The popular name of the society is Hare Krishnas, meaning "Victory to Lord Krishna." First let me repeat to you the real name of that society—The International Society for Krishna Consciousness or in short Iskon. Hare Krishna Society is one of the most ascetic and ritualistic sects in the world. Sometimes one wonders how the Hare Krishna Society attracts devotees with its very strict moral and ethical codes. *There is absolutely no drinking, smoking and/or casual-sex activities allowed to members of the Society.* The public chanting of the Mantra "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare; Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare," is one of the important activities of the devotees. According to Srimad Bhagavata anyone who utters this Mantra and anyone who happens to listen to this Mantra are both blessed by God.

In addition to public chanting each devotee repeats the same Mantra 1,728 times every single day. The chanting is counted by a string of 108 *Tulsi* beads. So the string is counted through 16 times each day. Hare Krishna devotees do even menial jobs as offerings to Lord Krishna. They cleanse their bodies at least twice a day and even among married people, sex is allowed only for progeny. Like any other society controversies still plague this society. Some people claim that their children were "brain- washed" by this pious society, but nobody can say exactly how much truth there is in those allegations. Hare Krishna devotees are pure vegetarians, and practise non-violence.

Hari (*yellowish brown*)

Minor incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Popularized by movements, Hari is one of the sons of the god Dharma who sprang from the heart of Brahma. He is most closely linked with Krsna, but he and Krsna also parallel Dharma's other

sons, Nara and Narayana. Hari can be a more generic epithet applied to several Hindu gods.

Hariti (*green or stealing*)

1. Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the group of *mataras* (mothers) who are the patrons of children. Considered by some to be identical with the goddess Vriddhi. Her consort is Pancika, alternatively Kubera. In her destructive aspect she steals and eats children. Particularly known from the north and north-west of India. Attribute: a child may be held at her hip, sometimes being eaten.

2. Plague goddess. Buddhist. Associated with smallpox. Also regarded in some texts as the goddess of fertility.

Harsa (*desire*)

Goddess. Hindu. The *Sakti* of the god Hrsikesa.

Hasta (*hand*)

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra* or astral goddess; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Hatthi

Plague goddess. Hindu. Particularly associated with cholera in north-western India.

Hayasya

1. Horse god. Hindu. Probably identical with Hayagriva.

2. Horse goddess. Buddhist. Attribute: the head of a horse.

Hemantadevi

Goddess of winter. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of several seasonal deities. Also an attendant of Sridevi. Usually acompanied by a camel. Colour: blue. Attributes: cup and hammer.

Heruka

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). One of the most popular deities in the

pantheon, though probably owing much to the influence of the Hindu god Siva.

Originally an epithet for another Hindu god, Ganesh, but in Buddhism seen as a emanation of Aksobbhya. His *Sakti* is Nairatma and the product of their liaison is *nirvana* (eternal bliss). Typically he stands upon a corpse. In north-eastern India, Heruka is worshipped as a compassionate god. Attributes: club, flayed human skin, image of Aksobhya, jewel, knife, fifty skulls, sword, staff and teeth.

Hevajira

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A *bodhisattva* (buddha-designate) and an emanation of Aksobhya. The Tantric form of Heruka and the Buddhist equivalent of the Hindu god Sive Nataraja. His *Sakti* is Nairatma or Vajravarahi and he may appear dominating the four *maras* (the Hindu gods Brahma, Visnu, Siva and Indra). Colour: blue Attributes: bell, bow, hook, image of Aksohya on crown, jewel, lotus, prayer wheel, wine glass. He holds a skull in each hand and an assortment of other weapons. Three - or eight-headed, from two to sixteen arms and two or four legs; three-eyed.

Hindu Dances

Hindu dances originated from the Lord Siva's (*The God of Annihilation*) famous dance namely Tandava Nrithyam. There are many versions of *Tandava Nrithyam.* The first one is the most horrendous dance of Lord Siva with is crew after the annighilation of his father-in-law *Daksha.* Another one is a *Dance of Death* in which Siva is accompanied by Bharaiva, a skeleton attendant. A third form is popularly known as *Nadanta,* in which the dancer as a toothless old man desperately dances the vigorous dance of Lord Siva. The last one is the dance of Siva mounting Nandi and the dance results in the creation on earth.

The first rules of the *Hindu* Dances were codified by sage *Bharata* (not the great King Bharata) between100 and 300 A.D.His treatise on drama, dance and music was known as Natyashastra. It is said that he is the first to compose the first syllables of *Bhava* (emotion), *Raga* (melody), *Tala* (rhythm) and (mood). Of course,

just like any other Hindu scripture, we have no conclusive proof to show that sage Bharata wrote *Natyashatra*. It might have been the work of hundreds of saints. Anyway in some aspects *Natyashastra* resembles Aristotle's Poetics.

Hindu Dance is closely linked with emotions. It is a perfect harmony between classical music and bodily movement. In fact its objective can be summed up to create different moods in the minds of the spectators. Almost all Hindu dances are performed barefoot. Sometimes, in North India the dancers wear tiny slippers. Believe it or not, once upon a time, Hind dances were performed only by *Devadasis* (God's-servants) and unluckily *Devadasi* were more or less temple-prostitutes and as such the dancer's profession was looked down upon by the society. But today, all dancers are treated with respect and admiration throughont India and almost every girl try to learn dancing in India and abroad. Dance is basically composed of *Abhinaya*—facial and body expressions, *Mudras* — hand gestures, and Gati-all forms of footwork.

There are Four prominent Hindu dances and they are as follows:

Bharata Natyam of Tanjore *Kathak* of Uttar Pradesh *Kathakali* of Kerals and *Manipuri* of Assam

Of course, there are still a large number of dances like *Mohiniyattam* of Kerala, *Kunchipudi* of Andhra, *Chhau* of Orissa. India is full of folk dances, and even though you may not see an ordinary Indian dancing in his day-to-day life, the tradition of dancing is the part and parcel of the Hindu culture.

Bharata Nayam:

This is actually a temple dance originated in the temples and performed by *Devadasis* (God's slaves). It originated in South India and greatly patronized by the Chola Kings. Legends say that during his exile as a transvestite, *Arjuna*, the celebrated warrior of Mahabharata, taught this to women in the harem of King Virata. *Bharata Natyam* is a solo dance and its classical poses have been sculptured on the walls of the temple at Chidambaram. As far as we know, there are 6 types of Bharata Natyam dances. They are:

1. *Alaripu* : An introductory and shortest form of Bharata Natyam lasting about 5 minutes.

2. *Jathi-Svaram* : More advanced form of dance. A very rhythmic form of footwork and body movements associated with different patterns of music.

3. *Varnam*: This is the dance which can make the spectator spellbound by its furious tempo. This is very elaborate and complex. Laste about one hour.

4. *Sadanam* : A dance associated with a poem.

5. *Padam* : Another dance associated with a poem.

6. *Tillana* : This dance is closely associated with Carnatic music and most people like Tillana as the best form of *Bharata Natyam.*

Kathak :

This is dance is a story form. This dance is very popular in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. It is based on mythological stories about Lord Krishna and his favorite consort Radha. Like *Bharata Natyam,* this dance also performes by *Devadasis* in temples of North India. Just like *Bharata Natyam,* this dance also is a proper combination of *Abhinayam. Mudra* and *Gati.*

Kathakali:

This dance actually originated in Malabar, Kerala. This dance is more or less in a dance-drama form, narrating the mythological stories in dance format. Almost all dancers are men and they are masked to depict the mythological characters they are representing. This dance lasts for 10 to 12 hours. Usually starting at 7 p.m. and ending at 7 a.m. it is an all-night show.

Manipuri :

This dance is usually performed by the hill people residing in Manipur, State of Assam. Both men and women take part in this dance accompanied by chorus singers. The costumes of dancers are very colourful with girls wearing long wide skirts. Just like *Kathak* dance, *Manipuri* dance theme is centered on Lord Krishna and his girl-friends, namely *Gopis.*

Lord Nataraja—the *King of Dance* symbolizes the Rhythm of the universe-the perpetural cycle of creation and annihilation. In his very famous book, *The Tao of Physics*, Fritjof Capra, explains *Dance as the most basic and relevant of all forms of expression* and uses such phrases as *The Dance of Creation and Destruction* and *Energy Dance*. So, in a nutshell, the Hindu Dances represents the *Vibration* (*Spandhanam*) in every being and every atom in this universe.

Hindu Diet code

According to Hinduism, food is divided into three categories — *Sattvic*, *Rajasic* and *Tamasic*. Tamasic is the worst food of all. The food that is left over and contaminated is usually called Tamasic food. These foods are supposed to produce jealousy and greed among men.

Rajasic foods: Food that consists of meat of animals is called Pajasic food. Rajasic food also contains spices, onions, garlic, hot-pepper, pickles etc. Rajasic foods are supposed to produce activity and strong emotional qualities among men.

Sattvic foods : Sattvic foods are those foods which do not agitate your stomach at all. Mauch of the Sattvic food consists of fruits and nuts, and vegetables. These foods are supposed to produce calmness and nobility among men. Hindu diet codes strictly prohibity the consumption of beef and pork. As per those codes, eating fruits and vegetables increases one's magneticism. From what we can understand today about diets, we are sure that ancient Hindu saints had a very good idea about food in general and their effect on the body and thinking pattern of man. Expression of the soul is dependent on the body, and the body is dependent on food. So for proper spiritual development, a proper diet is a must for everyone.

Hindu Holy Festivals

There are many Hindu festivals and their importance differs from place to place. *Holi* is a religious festival of North India, and it is not celebrated in South India. To give you another example, *Onam* (flower festival) is a very important religious festival in the State of

Kerala, but the rest of India does not celebrate it. Similarly the holy festival *Pongal* is strictly restricted to Tamil Nadu.

Deepavali Festival: Deepavali or the festival of lights is an important Hindu festival celebrated during the month of Kartika (October-November). *Deepa* mons "light' and Avali means 'row'. In brief *Deepavali* means a row of lights. Deepavali is the celebration of the triumphant return of Lord Rama and his consrot Sita to the kingdom of Ayodhya, after the annihilation of Ravana (King of Ceylon or Sri Lanka). During this celebration, people light rows of small candles or oil lamps along balconies and windows to welcome Lord Rama and Sita home. *Deepavali* is also considered a festival to worship Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu and Goddess of Wealth. A special Goddess Lakshmi pooja is performed in most Hindu homes during this festival. During Deepavali people visit friends and exchange sweets and gifts.

Dassera Festival : Dassera is another nine-day festival which is celebrated in many parts of India, specially in Mysore in the State of Karnataka. Dassera is the celebration of the victory of Goddess Durga (*Kali*) over the demon in the form of a buffalos by name *Mahishasura.* This festival is also called *Navaratri* meaning "nine nights". It is said that Goddess Durga took nine days and nights to annighilate demon. In northern parts of India, Dassera is a celebration of the victory of Lord Rama over demon-king Ravana, King of Sri Lanka. During Dassera special poojas are conducted in Hindu temples as well as in Hindu homes. Dassera festival lasts for a week.

Holi festival: This festival also has a mythological background. It is said that once the world was ruled by a demon-king, Hiranyakashipu. He proclaimed himself as God and made everyone pray to him but his son, *Prahlada,* persisted in worshipping Lord Vishnu. As per the order of Hiranyakashipu, a female demon named *Holika* who herself was believed to be immune to the ravages of fire carried *Prahlada* into fire. It is said that due to the blessings of Lord Vishnu, Prahlada came out untouched by the fire, whereas *Holika* was burnt to ashes. The Holi festival celebrates this mythological event. Some say that this festival is in

honor of Kama Deva, the god of sexual desire. Whatever the legends say, the Holi festival is one of the most important festivals of North India. Holi festival is celebrated during February-March. A bonfire is also lit on the eve of Holi. During the day following Holi, people throw coloured water and bright herbal powders at one another. Just as in Deepavali festival, during this festival also, people exchange gifts and sweets.

Onam Festival : This festival is celebrated in the State of Kerala only to mark the end of summer monsoon. This festival also has a mythological origin. It is said that once the world was ruled by a demon-king named *Mahabali* who made the world better than heaven. That was against the rule since the world was not supposed to be better than heaven and the god of heaven, Indra, was much annoyed. So to keep matters straight Lord Vishnu came down as Vamana (dwarf) and begged King Mahabali for land which would cover his three small steps. Without any thought, King Mahabali agreed. Then Vamana suddenly grew to unimaginable proportions and stepped over both heaven and earth by two giant steps. It is said that then King Mahabali lowered his head in front of Vamana to put his third step. Vamana then pushed King Mahabali down to the world underneath known as *Patala.* Just before King Mahavali was pushed out of this earth, he was given permission by Vamana to visit his people once every year. The *Onam* festival is a celebration of welcoming Mahabali to his lost kingdom. During this festival, beautiful floral decorations are made in every house and boat races are held throughout Kerala. A twenty-one-course feast is the more important part of the Onam festival.

Pongal Festival: This is an important festival held during January-February in the State of Tamil Nadu. It is a three-day festival celebrated at the time of the rice-harvest.

There are still more religious festivals in India. *Sivaratri* (February-March) is a festival honoring Lord Siva. It is celebrated throughout India. *Janmashtami* (August-September) is in celebration of the birthday of Lord Krishna. *Ganesh Chaturthi* (August-September) is a festival honoring Lord Ganesha, the elephant-headed son of Lord Siva. This festival is observed with

great zeal in cities like Bombay where images of Lord Ganesha are carried in special processions. *Vasant Panchami* (January-February) is a spring festival honoring Goddess Saraswati, the consort of Lord Brahma and Goddess of Knowledge.

Hinduism

Hindu population spread over throughout the vast land of India has a common basis of religious faith which furnishes a good evidence of the original unity of the Aryan inbabitants of this country during pre-historical days. Hinduism is like a big fig- tree growing from a single stem and then sending out numerous branches destined to strike roots to the ground and themselves becoming big trees in their own right. Thus a simple pantheistic doctrine has spread out into a vast polytheistic system with innumberable gods and goddesses and a mass of mythological literature.

Popular Hinduism supposes that one Universal Being call Him Brahm or Omkar, adopts so many appearances—each one having its distinctive character or displaying in part some one or more attribute of the Almighty, and this provides the basis of polytheism and the pantheon of gods and goddesses. There is a sacred number constantly appearing in Hindu religious system. Agni, Indra and Surya constitute the Vedic triad of gods. There are frequent allusions in Vedas to Thirty Three gods, which again is a multiple of three. Although Trimurti is not named as such in the Vedic hymns yet Veda is the basic source of this Triad of godly personifications. Vedic poet-seers had the tendency to group all the forces and energies of nature under three heads and the proliferation of the number of gods into thirty three was the assertion that each of the leading personifications was capable of eleven transformations. The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv holding the biggest sway in Hindu mythology today has not only its seed but even its root in the Vedas.

In the well-known hymn of the Rig Veda elucidating the mystery of creation given in Mandal X, 129, we perceive the first enunciation in world's religious literatre of the idea that the Creator willed to create the universe through the idea that the Creator willed to create the universe through the agency of a female

principle. This idea was expressed in the supposed marriage of heaven and earth and the Sankhya philosophy's union of Purush and Prakriti. It gathered so great a strength that later on every principlal deity of Hindu mythology had his own female companion, who shares the worship paid to male god, e.g., Sita and Ram, Parvati and Shiv, Radha and Krishna, Lakshmi and Vishnu.

As referred to above Hindu religion is today a huge structure which has spread over to an immense surface by continuous additions and accretions. All creeds and cults have found in it a refuge and home. It has even accepted Buddha as an incarnation of Vishnu. Universal tolerance and receptivity is the hall-mark of Hinduism. The preference of one-group to the worship of god Shiv may be termed Shaivism, while the tilt in favour of god Vishnu may be called Vaishnavism but these are never considered as opposite or incompatible creeds. Both accept and acquiesce to a certain extent in each other's views while laying an exaggerated veneration to one distinct deity. In most of the temples scattered all over India so many deities like Ram, Krishna, Shiv, Ganesh and others are put together and devotees pay equal homage to all.

Incarnation of God in this world is an important facet of Hindu faith. This view holds that God descends from His abode to earth in order to eradicate evils and sins whenever they start prevailing upon virtue and good deeds. Vishnu is the only member of the Trimurti who can be said to take human form in flesh and blood for the salvation of the world in times of peril and calamity. In Purans certainly there are found references of various gods adopting shares of human being or animals but the term 'Avatar' (reincarnation) in its proper connotation is accepted as applying to the descent of Lord Vishnu on earth. For example there is a form of Shiv called Virbhadra (according to a few he is Shiv's son). He is depicted as fierce with a thousand heads, eyes and feet. There are also eight Bhairavs who are all various forms of Shiv. Still these are not called as Avtars.

The doctrine of bhakti (personal devotion and surrender), which though existing in small measure earlier, found full play in the epic age. Vaishnavs enijoin their followers complete devotion to Ram or

Krishna, Shaivites ask for full surrender to Shiv while Shaktas call for the same attiude towards Durga, and Ganpatyas claim the same supreme status for Ganesh.

The practice of idol worship repersenting homage to gods, goddesses and minor deities is today an insperable part of Hindu religious system. There is not even one country in the world which can claim to have so many temples and shrines dedicated to gods and goddesses under different forms, images, symbols and names. The temples of the first category found in the greatest number are those of the principal gods, namely Shiv and Parvati are seen in almost all temples. In the South are commonly found the shrines of the other son of Shiv, named Kartikeya. Secondly are found all over India shrines dedicated to monkey-god Hanuman and to the terrible form of Parvati, namely Durga. In some cities like Varanasi besides the important shrines there are also found a few temples of Navgrah (the nine planets), which symbolised as nine gods, are generally being conciliated before marriage ceremony and a few other auspicious family functions.

Though carved images of some gods like Indra, Varun, Kuver, Kama, Parsuram, Yam and Varah are scattered in the land here and there, shrines dedicated exclusively to them are seldom found: so also is the case with animal gods like Garud, Sheshnag and Cow Annapurna.

Idols in temples of towns and cities do not exhaust the images worshipped by Hindus. In smallest of villages and most neglected localities, at the top of hills, on raised plateus and below stately trees one can see, if not an unfinished or dilapidated temple, at least rough idols or simple blocks consecrated to some local god or deity by putting sindoor (red paint) over it.

Out of hundreds of Hindu gods and goddesses a few have been included here narrating briefly their course and career as well as their physical description. Without indulging in philosophical discourses an attempt has been made to explain what are the peculiar attributes of the particular god and the reasons behind it. The treatment is neither exhaustive nor scholarly. It is meant to satisfy a layman's curiosity concerning chief deities, whom one

comes across most frequently while visiting places in this ancient land, called variously as Bharatvarsh, Aryavrat, Jambudweep. Hindustan and India.

Hinduism is not a religion, but a way of Life. Looking at it in another way, Hinduism is the relentless pursuit after truth. As such, it is the religion forever. For argument's sake, one can state that, if all Hindu scriptures are destroyed one day, this age-old religion will come back to life again within few years, since it pursues only HBSOLUTE TRUTH.

Hinduism has no problem facing any type of questions. It does not have to hide behind unpronounceable Sanskrit words or spiritual dogmas. Instead, it absorbs new ideas like a sponge. Believe it or not, Hinduism recharges itself with modern technology. Psychology, parapsychology, modern astronomy, the new physics and genetics enrich Hinduism.

In Hinduism, you can think and argue on any subject. You can even make statements like, There is No Krishna or Rama and still be a Hindu. It has no hierarchy, it has no establish ment and it has no governing body.

In Hinduism, one will seldom come across a statement starting with *THOU SHALT NOT.* As you study Hinduism, from one end to the other end, you will find it to be filled with all kind of ideas. It has highly spiritualistic *Advaita* and *Raja Yoga* on one side and highly materialistic, atheistic, hedonistic *Charvaka philosophy*, which does not believe in God and Vedas on other side.

On one side, Idolatry is a part of Hinduism and still on another side, as per the words of German philosopher-thinker Max Muller : "The religion of Vedas knows no idols." The *Jahala Upanishad* says : "Images are meant only as aids to medittion for the ignorant."

The ancient Hindu mythology is filled with all kinds of stories. One one side. *Advaita* talks about *Brahman* (the Infinite) alone and stil on other side mythology talks about thousands of Gods. It is indeed a religion with unity in diversity Picking up subjects randomly from Hindu scriptures, could confuse you. But if you sit down and

study them all, you will be able to understand the actual truth behind all Hindu scriptures. Today there is a quite large number of books on Hinduism available in English and in so many other languages and so even the knowledge of Sanskrit is not a Must to understand Hindu scriptures.

I am happy that you asked me this question. Arjuna asked the same question to Lord Krishra, during the narration of the Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu Holy Bible. Lord Krishna as an answer to Arjuna showed him his Viswroopa—the great formless form or shapeless shape and a stunned Arjuna saw the whole world revolving on the body of God. Arjuna got more than he had bargained for. Well, I cannot show you any such thing. You may laugh, but since even Arjuna asked that question to Lord Krishna, it is perfectly all right for you to ask me the same question. On my part I can only say that I am a humble aspirant of truth like so many people. Of course, I have read quite a large number of books to the tune of 500 regarding Hindusism and all other religions. My only intention is to lay out before you, the history of Hinduism as well as the very salient points about Hinduism. After listening to my answers, you on your part should investigate the validity of my statements. At this juncture, let me repeat one of the stanzas from a scripture, which a Guru told his disciple:

Nobody knows what is right or what is wrong;

Nobody knows what is good or what is bad;

There is a deity residing within you;

Find it out and obey its commands.

That is my answer. Please understand the deity mentioned in the stanza is none other than the Inner Voice about which Aurobindo, the modern Hindu mystic wrote volumes. It is indeed the Christ within or to put it in better words it is the smmortal *Holy Ghost.* I just wanted to point out to you that all final answers are within. Like a Zen Master. I want to tell you that to seek answers without oneself is futile and idiotic. Zen Buddhists say that Truth cannot be taught by the word of mouth and true knowledge only comes from personal experience.

Again please do not misunderstand the above stanza as a green light for licentiousness and do things as one's emotions dictate. Emotions within a man are very deceptive. They can come out with intellectual authority and make every silly action look meaningful... They even dupe great saints and seers in believing in their own personal egoistic sentiments and to act very foolishly. So be very cautious of the above verses I quoted from a scripture.

Once a gentleman told the famous American philosopher Emerscn, that he (gentleman) had studied almost all philosophies and religions of the world, and he was finally convinced that Christianity was the only one; to which Emerson replied: That only shows, my friend, how narrowly you have read them. The same statement goes for Hinduism too. Nobody has the right to say that Hinduism is the only one. In fact Hindus consider it absurd to state that any other true religion of the world is false.

The Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 4-11) saya:

Whatever and whichever way men approach me,

Even so do accept them;

Whatever paths (religions) they may choose,

Finally lead to Me On! Arjuna (His disciple).

From the above lines, one can easily understand that Hinduism does not project itself as the only way to God-realization. It claims no monopoly to wisdom. It tolerates all forms of thoughts. A Hindu yogi will never try to convert a person from another religion to Hinduism. Instead he will try to make a person's faith steadfast in his/her own religion. The Gita says: In whatever form a devotee seeks to worship me with faith, I make his faith steadfast in that form alone. So as per Hinduism, you can worship Almighty, which is formless and timeless, as Krishna, Jesus, Allan, Moses, Any-one or Anything...As long as you have faith in that form of the Almighty, you will be following a true religion and you will ultimately realize *The Truth*, even if you are following a crude form of worship.

In India, saints often say that *if you visualize it and call forth*

intensely as a 'water buffalo', then 'IT' will appear in front of you as a water buffalo. In fact, legends say that God appeared in front of American-Indians, as a Buffalo.

When someone calls IT as Jesus Christ, IT comes as Jesus Christ; when someone call IT as Lord Krishna, IT comes as Lord Krishna. Even the most popular devotee of the world, sage Narada calls God by word Asmin meaning That in the 2nd Sutra of Narada Bhakti Sutra. Sufis said: wheresoever you turn, there is the face of Allah.

In all worships, ultimately worshippers will transcend the *Name* and Form of their personal Good. Look at the writings of St. Francis of Assissi or Sufi mystics or Lord Chaitanya or Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Lord Chaitanya cried for Vithal and Ramarkrishna cried for Mother Kali. But if one can see that the ABSOLUTE they were after has no name and form and it is beyond human description. All of them started with their attachment to a personal God and finally ended up with An Almighty which is Timeless and Formless.

A true Hindu never proselytizes. The Bhagavad Gita urges everyone to follow the religion in which he/she was born. Just like Hindus, Jews are also very tolerant of believers of other faiths. Jews do not persuade others to join their religion. Of course, there are many converts to Judaism, but Jews never actively peopagate their faith. To some extent, just like Hinduism, Judaism also is a *way of life*. Again Hindus look at religion as a basic science. Have you ever heard of somebody being converted into Indian Chemistry, or British Physics. So it is absurd even to discuss about conversions. There is only one truth. All of us have equal right to that truth, like all of us have equal right to Raman's Effect (Indian), Einstein's Experiments (American). So *The Bhagavad Gita. The Holy Bible, The Koran, The Tora, The Dharmapada* etc. are open to all. All of us have equal right to quote Christ and Krishna and Lao-Tse and Socrates and Mohammad in the same sentence. *Just like all sciences are open to all, all religions are open to all.*

In Hinduism, tolerance is not simply a matter of policy but an article of faith. Historians like H.G. Wells say that Hindu kings actually welcomed with open arms Christian missionaries and

Muslim Fakirs and Buddhist monks for free exchange of ideas. One great Hindu king, Ashoka, in fact changed his religion to Buddhism and propagated Buddhism throughout India. One of the great apostles of Jesus Christ, St. Thomas came all the way to Madras, India, and propagated Christianity and finally died at Mylapore, Madras. *A true Hindu never condemns any true religion. He/She accepts the truth behind all religions.* A Hindu saint will only be happy to read the Bible or the Koran to his devotees.

Swami Vivekananda said : *I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true. As different streams having different sources all mingle their waters in the sea, so different paths which men take through tendencies, various thoughts they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to God.*

Hinduism not only allows, but actually encourages one to seek truths from all sources. Within Hinduism, it stricity forbids comparison of different methods of God-realization for their individual merits, since all methods are true and all of them lead devotees to God-realization. After studying Hinduism well, a Hindu should read and study all other true religions. Then he or she will be able to see Hinduism as the encyclopedia of religions, fully grasping the greatness of Jesus Christ, the sacrificial nature of Sufi saints and the importance of the ten commandments. If one knows Hinduism well, the Bible, Koran, Adi Grantha (the holy book of Sikhs) will be interesting to read.

One of the great Hindu Puranas, Srimad Bhagavatam says: *Like a honey bee gathering trickles of honey from different flowers, the wise man accepts the essence of different scriptures and sees only the good in all religions. With that kind of ideology, a Hindu should be eager to read all religious books in the world.*

No. As I told you before, in Hinduism there is no hierarchy. One of the ancient Hindu saints, Adi Sankara set up four monasteries in different corners of India, which are popularly known as Sankaramaths. They are at Sringeri (Mysore). Badrinath (Himalayas), Dwaraka (Gujarat) and Puri (Orissa). The chief priest

of each monastery is called Sankaracharya and priests teach Hindus all aspects of Hinduism. Of course, these monasteries have no power to rule over the individual will of any Hindu. There are many monasteries in India, apart from the four I mentioned above, and all of them are independent of each other and all of them propagate Hindu ideals in their own individual way, without criticizing each other.

Nobody is excommunicated from Hinduism... Nobody Nobody is persecuted in Hinduism... Hinduism had revolutionaries like Buddha (who refused to acknowledge the authority of Vedas) and Adi Sankara (who propagated Advaita Philosophy). but it never had any major division and never will be... for it is open to all type of criticisms from all quarters.

Hinduism started with *Sruti*, that which is heard. The Christlike masters of Vedic age called *Rishis* heard in their hearts eternal truths' and they taught their disciples telepathically, by actual transfer of thoughts. Later they came out with languages like Sanskrit and Pali. For long periods of time, there were no written texts. The *Vedas* and *Upanishads* were taught in chanting lyrics.

We know that thought is the best medium of realizing true knowledge, but since we cannot transfer thoughts, we express them in languages. Verbal language is better than written language in expressing thoughts. Sanskrit, Pali, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were used to express thoughts in ancient days. It is said that Jesu Christ talked in Armenian language and years after his crucifixion the *New Testament* was written in three languages namely Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, The *New Testament* still preserve some important Aramaic statements such as *Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani* My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me)—Mathew 27:46. During 15th century, the first English version of the Bible, as a translation from its originals from Greek and Hebrew was written by William Tyndale. Unfortunately, William Tyndale. Unfortunately, william Tyndale (1525) was accused of blasphemy any later executed and burned at the stake!

After Tyndale, seven more subsequent English versions of the Bible were written. The last of which is the most popular King

James version of Bible, meaning that this popular Bible was complied by a large number of theologians under the leadership of King James of England in 1611. Unluckily, even the first edition of King James Version of the English Bible had about 300 errors in it. (Ref: *How we got the Bible by Neil* R. Lightfoot. This only shows, how difficult it is to write thoughts in words, even a great scripture like Bible.

English right now is spoken by the vast majority of people and its vocabulary has developed abundantly and has become the prime means of conveying throught. So, English may be the only language in the world, which can express Truths in more understandable format. Luckily for us, we have Mathematics and Physics and other sciences to aid us to understand subtle truths today. Again understanding is something very personal. Forexample $E=MC^2$ may be just a few letters for common folks, but for students of science, they speak volumes. So eternal truths can be understood only if we evolve high enough to understand the truth. This is true of Hinduism. Christiantiy, Islam and all other religions. Taoism states "Impressions of life cannot be conveyed by words."

The Chinese mystic Lao-Tse said.

He who knows never tells.

He who tellsnever knew...This shows subtle truths are indeed difficult to express in words sincewords try to limit the size of the subtle truth. It will be correct to conclude that human mind can never conceive the ultimate truth of the universe. Indeed Einstein tried to develop an unified field theory to explain all the riddles in the universe, but he failed miserably. Finally Einstein accepted defeat and said: *The human mind is not capable of grasping the universe. We are like a little child, entering a huge library.* Gauthama Buddha had very clearly stated that only by transcending human existence, one can understand the supreme reality. That may be the reason why *BUDDHA* as a young prince who left the country to get intant remedies for *old age* and death, came back with his famous 8-fold path to *Nirvana.* If there are ready-made answers to the riddles of the universe, great masters

like Buddha and Christ would have surely given them to the world. Since their answers are ambiguous to almost all of us, we have to face the fact that *ultimate truths are beyond mind and beyond duality perception.*

Today, confined to his wheel-chair, unalble to speak, paralysed by an incurable disease, the great British Physicist Stephen Hawking seeks the *grand unification thery that will explain all the riddles of the universe... Will he succeed? Will he be able to unlock the mysteries of the universe? That is one billion- dollar question*? Issac Newton's universe was perfect and linear and predictable. Einstein's universe became somewhat unpredictable and in wave pattern. Today's scientists claim the universe is somewhat chaotic and unpredictable.

Very surely so. Look at one of the oldest Hindu scripture *Manusmriti.* You will see that Manu has restricted the freedom of women in so many ways. He also had put down the foundation-stone of the modern-day caste system. The Code of Manu indeed is the history of a nomad society. taking roots on the banks of the river Indus. Similarly look at *Exodus in the Old Testament.* It talks about slaves and how to treat them. Old Testament is the true history of Jews in those times. So I fully agree with you, almost all criptures in the world are part and parcel of History and Tradition.

Is metaphor a part of all scriptural languages?

Many may disagree with me, but I must say that metaphor is a part and part of all religious scriptures. The poet within the saint has taken off and wrote things in almost all religious scriptures in the world. One will come across lines similar to the *Lotus Eaters* of Tennyson, in many religious scriptures in one form or other.

So religious scriptures should be properly scanned to get proper meanings rather than studying them as true in every written word. We will make grave errors if we try to analyze the literal meanings of the scriptures.

The word *Theism* means 'belief in a god or gods.' So the word *Atheism* means 'absence of theistic belief or the belief that there is

no god or gods of any kind.' So in a nutshell *a person who does not believe in the existence of a God is an Atheist. Agnostic* on other hand is a person who believes that there are things beyond human mind. An agnostic may or may not believe in a God. So an agnostic can be a *theist* or an *atheist.* The term Gnostic as well as mostic were actually coined by a philosopher- thinker Thomas Huxley in 1869. Gnostic came from the Greek root- word *Gnosis* meaning to know.

The best explanation of both terms came from the Catholic Encyclopedia and it is as follows:

"An agnostic is not an atheist. An atheist denies the existence of God; an agnostic professes ignorance about His existence. For the latter, God may exist, but reason can neither prove of disprove it."

I should say some intellectuals in the world are agnostic. But at the same time, most uneducated masses are just believers. Most religions in the world, uses 'the fear of God and hell' to make people believe in their religions. This you will never come across in Hinduism. A believer, an Atheist and an Agnostic can happily coexist in Hinduism. Let us look at the case of Bertrand Russell West looked at him as an atheist. But actually he was an agnostic. He questioned everything and he never came to any conclusions. The only mistake he did was to write a book named *Why I am not a Christian.* He should not have named the book in that format to hurt the feelings of millions of devoted Christians around the globe. He had no right to hurt the feelings of millions of Christians... He should have named instead *The doubts I have about world religions.* That would have saved him from unnecessary citicisms from many religious quarters as well as denying himself a job in the New York City. Anyway, I don't think he has ever written that *There is no God.* For that will be against his style, denying or approving something which he has no idea of, nor he has any definition of. *Russell did not deny God, since he could not define God.* Standing in Hinduism, one can easily respect and admire people like Russell, Freud and Darwin. Hinduism has its share of atheists and agnostics. The *Charvaka* philosophy and to some extent *Vaisesika* philosophy question the existence of a persona!

God. Kanada, the founder of Vaisesika philosophy only mentioned God as That in all his writings.

Do you mean to say that an agnostic will stay an agostic forever? All Hindu scriptures point out to the fact that agnosticism is the starting point of a relentless pursuit after truth. Just like a pinch of salt, which goes to find out the depth of the ocean, becomes part and parcel of the ocean, an agnostic will finally realize eternal truths, if he persists in his search of truth. But just like Buddha, he won't be able to explain that truth he found out, to the world, since that truth is beyond description or beyond comparison. I feel most agnostics will finally become bersonalities like J.Krishnamoorthy and Buddha, provided they do not try to seek intellectual answers to the riddles of the universe. ..Krishnamoorthy as an orphan was hand-picked by late Annie Besent to become a great leader of the Theosophical society. But as time went on Krishnamoorthy transcended all positions and power and questioned the integrity of every minute things in every religion. Finally, he became an institution in himself, without an iota of ego. Of course, Drishnamoorthy was not an agnostic at all. He was a logician with great capabilities. So as far as Hinduism is concerned agnosticism is the starting point of relentless pursuilt after truth.

Hindu Marriages

Most Hindu marriages are arranged by parents. There was a time when the bride and groom would be meeting at the wedding for the first time. That system has changed now. Nowadays parents of both bride and groom first meet and discuss the forthcoming marriage. Then the boy and girl are to meet. If they like each other and only *if they like each other*, the wedding plans proceed. If either does not like the other, the wedding plans are immediately dropped. The following is the most important part of any marriage. That is the checking of astrological charts of both the boy and the girl and to see that both charts match each other perfectly. If the family astrologer sounds an alarm, the wedding is called off. After all this, the wedding takes place in an elaborate ceremony. Hindus do not believe in any kind of courtship before marriage. The belief among them is that love develops gradually after marriage and not before.

The sincere love one sees in a Hindu household proves that point beyond boubt. Of course, the tradition of "arranged" marriages in breaking down in India now and "falling in love and marrying" is common at least among educated people.

Hindu wedding differ from place to place. The ceremony is usually held at the bride's house and sometimes even held in a temple. The wedding date for a Hindu marriage is fixed only after careful astrological calculations. The ceremony is performed before a fire lit in a special metal vessel or fire lit in a lamp format. Usually a Hindu priest conducts the wedding ceremony by reciting hymns from the scriptures written in Sanskirit. As a part of the ceremony bride and groom exchange rings and groom presents the bride with sarees. The bride and groom garland each other and at the end of the ceremony the couple walk around the fire a few times. Among some castes, the couple walk around the fire three times and among some other castes the couple walk around the fire seven times (Saptapdi).

Since there are many castes and sub-castes in the Hindu community, the wedding ceremony differs from place to place. Some marriage ceremonies last for an hour and some even take days to finish. There was a time when child marriages were prevalent in India, but now such marriage is a crime punishable by imprisonment.

Statistics shows that there is not even one per cent of divorce among Hindus now. "Arranged marriages" work because Hindus believe that the union of marriage is predetermined and is a form of Karma. They also work because Hindus, unlike many others, try very hard *NOT TO BREAK A WEDLOCK.* In Hindu marriages literally the union is not between a boy and a girl but between two families. The girl is given in marriage to a family and not to a boy. Of course, like any other place in the world, India too is changing due to western ideas of divorce and instant love and as such the divorce rate among Hindus may increase as the years pass by.

Hindu Rituals

Ritual is the colourful art of worshipping a deity. The two most

popular rituals are *Pooja* And *Yajna. Pooja* is the commonest form of rituals. The Vedas do not speak about Pooja. They contain elaborate forms of worship in homes and temples. One of the main parts of this ritual is the offering of many articles called *Upacaras* (offerings with honor) to the deity. The Upacaras consists of food, perfumed water, Tulasi leaves, sandalwood paste, incense, flower, ash, clothes etc. The person who conducts Pooja in a temple is called a Poojari. *Arati* is another important part of Pooja ceremony. It is a very common ritualisic waving of lights before the image of the deity. After the Pooja, the house-holder or Poojari distributes offerings made to the deity known as Prasad to fellow-devotees. Prasad consists of food as well as herbal powders.

Yajnas are performed at temporary altars constructed as per Tantric Laws. These altars are made exclusively for Yajnas and as soon as the Yajna is over, the altar is destroyed. *Yajna invoves no image or idol of God.* Most Yajna ritual involves simultaneous chanting by many Brahmin priests. There are two kinds of Yajnas. One done for the good of the householders. Public Yajnas used to be sponsored by kings, but they are now sponsored by several Hindu temple managements and socio religious organisations. One of the most popular domestic Yajnas is Ganapati Homam. This Yajna is done in most Hindu homes once a year by a very capable Brahmin priest. Even though the deity of this Yajna is Lord Ganapati, construction of the altar and performance of the ceremony itself are as laid down by Tantric Laws and no idol is present during the ceremony. A special Yantra (complex geometrical figure) is drawn on the altar and this Yantra personifies the deity of worship. Yajna is usually done for material human welfare. Of course by performing Yajnas a devotee is indirectly brought closer to God, for he fully understands the power of God in his day-to-day affairs.

One of the very ancient rituals is known as Rajasuya Yajna or "horse sacrifice". It is a Vedic ritual and usually done during the coronations of kings. The term Rajasuya means "King-engendering". It is said in the Mahabharata that the Pandavas conducted the Rajasuya ritual under the guidence of Lord Krishna. In its entire course, this ritual lasts two years. Even though this ritual is associated with the coronations of kings, it also stresses the

continuance of the cosmic rhythm of birth and life. *Agnihotra is* another domestic ritual still practised by orthodox Brahmins. Apart from all the rituals described above, there are a number of Vedic rituals collectively known as Samskaras. Samskara means "refinement". The Samskaras consist of all rituals from the time of birth to the time of death. There are at least 16 *Samskara* rituals. They are : 1. *Garbhadhana* is a ritual to guarantee conception. 2. *Pumsavana* is to protect the foetus and to have a baby boy. 3. *Simantonnayana* is a ritual done during the last month of pregnancy for the proper mental formation of the child. 4. *Jatakarma* is the birth ritual involving the preparation of the astrological chart of the child. 5. *Namakarana* is a ritual for naming the child. 6. *Nishkramana* is a ritual of taking the child out of the house for the first time. 7. *Annaprasana* is the first feeding of rice done usually in front of the God in a temple. 8. *Chudakarana* is th ritual of first cutting of hair. 9. *Karnavedha* is the ritual of boring of the ear lobes of the child for putting gold earrings. 10. *Vidyarambha* is the beginning of the child learning the alphabet. 11. *Upanayana* is the holy thread ritual by which the boy becomes a Dwija (twice-born). 12. *Vedarambha* is the actualcommencement of Vedic studies. 13. *Keshanta* is the ritual of first shaving the head. 14. *Samavartana* is the ritual of home-coming after completion of Vedic studies. 15. *Vivaha* is the marriage ritual. 16. *Antyeshti* is the ritual of funeral rites. Rituals performed at death are collectively known as *Shradha.* These ritual last 12 days.

Immediately after death the corpse is cremated, the funeral pyre is lit by the deceased's eldest son. The remaining ceremonies are conducted to case the problems for the soul's journey to the world of ancestors. The ceremonies consist of offering small rice balls to birds like crows. The crows are supposed to be departed souls. The Shradha rituals are very ancient, going back to early Vedic times. Shradha is done every year for the sake of the departed soul.

Tirtha Yatra or visiting holy places is another very important ritual in every Hindu's life. Hinduism prescribes many rituals appropriate to a variety of circumstances castes and regions.

Kumbhabhishekam is a very important ritual of temple

consecration associated with temple construction. The ritual literally means *anointing of the pot.* During the construction of temples at Pittsburgh and New York, this ritual was performed. Kumbhashekam is associated with very powerful symbolism. The rituals of the Kumbhabhishekam are performed in a series of eight sequences starting with a ritual named Swastivachanam, Which is a ritual welcoming all guests.

Hindu Search of God

In none of the Hundu scriptures is it said that one has to run away from one's earthly belongings and duty (Svadharma) to achieve God-realization. In fact, the Bhagavad Gita advocates doing one's own duty. After the great Bhagavad Gita discourse, Arjuna did not become a hermit, instead he fought a ferce war. Almost at the end of the Bhagavad Gita discourse, Lord Krishna said to Arjuna, "*Mam Anusmara Yudhyacha*" meaning "*Remembering me, fight the war,*" which means, "*thinking of God, do one's own duty.*" So nowhere is it said that one has to run to the jungles in search of God. Of course, Hinduism says that the change of mentality from material to spiritual is slow, like a glutton worm which eats three to four times its weight, and finally becomes a butterfly. So changesshould be made gradually without frustration. Hinduism advocates the statement, "*You can possess things, but do not be possessed by them,*" King Janaka is a perect example On one side he was a materialistic king of that century and on the other, he was one of the greatest yogis India has ever seen. Understand, the Yogi who fights for his loin cloth in the bitter winter of the Himalayas is no better than the cunning businessman. Both are possessed by greed and anger. So, change of consciousness is more important than change of outward appearances or change of lifestyles.

That is exactly what I want to tell you again. Even Swami Vivekananda had problem when his master Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa made him see God for the first time, since his consciousness then was not at the highest level. Vivekananda, then known as Narendra, tormented everyone with his inquisitive question, "Have you seen God?" Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa alone answered Vivekananda, "Son, I see him, like I see you" and

touched the forehead of Vivekananda. Narendra, who had troubled so may Yogis with his penetrating question about God, then uttered the cry of a lamb. It is said that the power was too much for the great offspring of India to bear and he implored, "Leave me, Sir, I bave my mother, father and others at home." (Ref: *Life of Swami Vivekananda by his Western and Eastern Disciples*). There is no easy way out. God is close to us and yet He cannot come to us. We keep Him away from us. Christ said: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come unto him." (Revelation 3-20). Those words reaffirm the fact that without individual effort, without changing the consciousness, God cannot come to anyone, even though God is so close to everyone of us.

Anyone who sincerely seek the Absolute Truth will finally realise the Absolute Truth, even if he/she is totally ignorant of Vedas and Upanishads. All religious scriptures are only aids in the pursuit of truth and they are not a 'Must' in search of the Ultimate Truth. Jesus Christ very emphatically said: "Seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." (Matthew 7-7). So whether a person is well-versed in scriptures or not, if he/she is sincere in his/her desire to know the turth, he/she will finally realise the truth. God appears in front of anyone who surrenders his personal will to divine will. In so many verses in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna teaches very easy ways by which one can attain Him, the *Absolute*. In verse 9.22 Lord Krishna said that He Himself undertakes the burden of taking care of the day-to-day problems of a devotee, who dedicates himself to Him (God) by surrendering his fre will. In verses 12-6, 7 of the Gita Lord Krishna said: "Those who surrender all actions to Me and regard Me as the supreme goal and worship Me with whole- hearted devotion, will be saved by Me from repeated births and deaths." Give up all righteous and non-repeated births and deaths." In another verse the Lord said: Gita 18-66 : "Give up all righteous and non-righteous actions and come unto Me; Take refuge in Me. Then I shall free you from all sins; grieve not." Through all those lines God is asking for unquestionable whole- hearted devotion from the aspirant and there is no mention of studying the seriptures at all. There is nothing

wrong in studying scriptures, but it is wrong to feel that people who are ignorant of scriptures have no chance for salvation. That is the reason why in Hinduism all methods of God-realization are equally important. The devotional lamentation of a Bhakti Yogi, the selfless actions of a Karma Yogi, the pranayama exercises of a Raja Yogi and the scriptural contemplation of a Jnana Yogi are all treated with same respect throughout Hinduism. Meera Bhajans, Advaita philosophy and Patanjali *Yoga Sutra* have equal status in Hinduism.

It is easy to say "Salvation". but that is the ultimate goal. Right now, we are trying to achieve peace and harmony in life. *In a way we are trying to have a stress-free life. The Hindu way of life aids that effort.* Those who follow Hinduism are generally calm at heart and they express their calmness in their day-to-day life. They do not scream and shout when their dinner is not served on time or if they are caught in a traffic-jam or if they have just lost their job. Once in a while, they also get agitated but that state of mind is only tomporary. As I told you before, it is quite easy to follow Hinduism because *Hinduism believes that ignorance is the root of all evils and true knowledge is the answer to all problems.* First try to understand the Truth and then try to practise and realise that Truth.

So, most of us who adhere to Hinduism are not trying to become Gurus or hermits or philosophers. We are just trying to have a *stress-free peaceful life.* If that is achieved, then one has really profited by the study of Hinduism. The methods described are very simple and anyone can practise them. Hope I have made my point very clear to you.

Hindu Temple Construction

To begin with, many Hindus believe that only saints like Adi Sankaracharya have the capability to consecrate temples. In fact as per history, almost all prominent Hindu temples are consecrated by great saints and constructed by Hindu kings. The actual construction and consecration of a temple is done as per the Silpa Shastra, the Hindu architectural book. The process of construction and consecration of a temple is very elaborate. To begin with, temples are constructed on a site that is 'Shubha' (beautiful and

auspicious), in the neighbourhood of rivers. Under all circumstances, a temple should be built only in very congenial surroundings. Their erection is considered a reintegration of Prajapati (first Man of creation like Adam) enabling him to continue his creative activity. Two of the most important ritual sequences associated with the construction and consecration of any Hindu temple are *Pratishta* (installation of *icons*) and *Kumbhaabhishekam* (temple dedication). The *Pratishta* is the process by which icons are endowed with divinity. The cosmic pillar is an important part of a Hindu temple. It is supposed to be the communication channel between mortals and gods. In modern times, one of the finest temples constructed in the world is Sri Venkateswara Temple in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and the construction and consecration of this temple are preserved in a very descriptive documentary film.

'Idol-making' is a very elaborate process. They are made out of special wood as well as from special stones. When they are made out of wood, the tree is cut on an auspicious day and time as per astrological calculations. The artisan who makes the idol is known as 'Silpi'. Prior to making the idol, the 'Silpi' undergoes ritualistic purification and parays to gods for help. It is said that he meditates and mentally visualises the idol, prior to starting the work. After the idol is made, it is purified by water, 'darbha grass', honey, and ghee (liquified butter). Then by a special Nyasa ritual (touching ceremony) the deity is invoked on the idol. Finally by a special Mantra, *Prana* or 'breath of life' is infused into the idol. Now idol-making is complete. Of course my description is very brief and the actual ceremony is very elaborate and colourful.

"Garbha Griha?" Is the innermost chamber of a temple, where the idol is consecrated. The word meaning of Garbha Graha is 'the home of pregnancy' which actually means a womb. Some temples are with several enclosures and they are supposed to represent the human body which is supposed to have five *Kosas* or sheaths. The outermost enclosure represents Annamaya Kosa (sheath made of food) and the deity residing in the Garbha Grigh represents *Atman* or soul.

Hinglaj (-Mata)

Mother goddess. Hindu, Locally worshipped in northern India and particularly in Baluchistan.

Hotr (a) (*invoker*)

Minor goddess of sacrifices. Hindu (Vedic). She is invoked to appear on the sacrificial field before a ritual and is particularly identified with the act of prayer. Usually associated with the goddess Sarasvati.

Hygiene and Aura

Hindus don't "kiss and hug" like others? Of course, the questions of hygiene and fear of getting diseases have a lot to do with it. Apart from that, like anywhere else in the world, we are also concerned with such simple actions finally leading to incest.

Apart from all that, there is also an occult theory behind not touching one another. According to this theory, everyone has an *aura*, in brief every creature including plants has *auras*. This *aura* is more or less like the corona surrounding a hightension electric overhead line. It is said, *auras* of Christ and masters like him were visible to the naked eye. The aura of a man is the summation of his thoughts, actions and past Karmas. It is said, for example, that if the person whom we are embracing has "powerful depressive thoughts", it can badly affect our own *aura*. Similarly our aura will be benefited if we embrace a person with "powerful positive thoughts'. At the same time, embracing amongst the two sexes is equally dangerous, even to God-realised masters, for even they may fall under the mighty power of sexual attraction.

So, whichever way you look at it, embracing and kissing are not good acts to follow as a routine when meeting anyone in our day-to-day life, even if such acts are motivated by very noble thoughts. Again, it is worong to believe that affection can be expressed only by physical touch.

Modern science has not come out with any specific proof about the *aura's* existence. At the same time, it is coming to the conclusion that our brain is a small electric generator and our thinking and

actions are just "electric impulses".

Anyway, going back to the question *of aura*, it is believed that the finger-tips are one point through which this powerful aura can be discharged. That is the reason why, when God-realised masters bless you, they bless you be touching the topmost point of your head, which is a powerful center known as Sahasrara in the books relating to Kundalini Power. To protect losing of power from the aura, Hindus show the *Namaste* sign, (touching the fingertips of both hands) during which they keep the *aura* in a close-circuited position like two magnets' power that are kept intact by spacers short-circuiting their poles.

In Christianity this, power of the *aura* is known as Virtue. When Jesus Christ was dragging the cross across the streets of Jerusalem, a leper happened to touch him, and Christ said, "Virtue has gone out of me, who touched me?" Then after seeing the leper turned into a healthy woman, Christ said, "Thy faith made thee whole." Here it is the power from the aura of Christ that transformed the woman and the woman could receive the power only because of her intense faith.

Hrsikesa (*lord of the senses*)

God. Hindu. Minor *avatara* of Visnu. His *Sakti* is Harsa.

I

Idol Worship

To begin with, Hindu scriptures do not recommend the worship of an image as God. In fact, scriptures very clearly state that an idol is not a substitute for God, but only a means of making the mind think about God. An idol in a temple is exactly like a cross in a church. Both help men to focus their devotion on God.

Again Hinduism very clearly states that mental worship is far superior to worship of images, but all worship starts with images. Ordinary people cannot conceive anything without a form. In every religion God with some form is worshipped. Hinduism has the courage to admit it to the world.

In Raja Yoga, the scientific part of Hinduism, God is looked upon somewhat as pure energy. In that part of Hinduism, there is no mention of God with form. In the Upanishads, God has been described or explained as "*Neti-Neti*" meaning "Not this — Not this" format. Even the Bhagavad Gita states, "Fools not knowing my unalterable transcendental with a manifested form."

So even though God is timeless and formless, there is absolutely nothing wrong in worshipping Him with form. In fact many saints including the late Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa believe that the concept of a personal God (*Ishta Devata*) is very useful in self-purification.

Iksvaku

Creator god. Hindu (Vedic). One of the ancestral dynasty of sun gods or *Aditi.*

Ila

Minor god (dess) of sacrifies. Hindu (Vedic). She is invoked to appear on the sacrificial field before a ritual. Usually associated with the goddess Sarasvati, Ila is linked with the sacred cow and her epithets include 'butter-handed' and 'butter- footed'.

Indology

Indology is the study of Indian history, literature, religions and languages by the West. It started with the publication of a Dutch translation of poems by a saint named Bhartrihar by a Dutch missionary to South India, Roger Abraham in 1651. Bhartrihari's peoms dealt with the customs and religion of the Brahmins. Later, another Austrian Roman Catholic priest by name Fra Paolino de san Bartolommeo wrote two Sanskrit grammar texts (1790) for the use of Christian missionaries in India.

The enthusiasm of the West about India reached its climax, after Voltaire referred about *Yajur Veda* in his book, *Customs and Spirit of Nations.*

The man who really caused the development of Indology, was none other than the first English Governor-General to India, Warren Hastings (1732-1818). He was indeed lost in the beauty of the Bhagavad Gita and he arranged the first English translation of the Gita to English. He wrote in the preface to the first English translation (1875) that *The Gita would survive when the British Dominion in India shall have long ceased to exist.* Hastings made the Brahmin Pandits to prepare a condensed text of the Hindu Codes and Laws based on ancient scriptures. This text originally written in Sanskrit, was later translated to English and was published in 1776 as a Code of Hindu Law by Nathaniel Halhed. After Warren Hastings, very many scholars from Europe got fascinated by Hindu Scriptures and they studied Sanskrit and translated much of Hindu Scriptures into English. One German scholar, Gundart came down to Kerala State and wrote a dictionary for the language Malayalam.

Germany is one of the countries in the world where Indology is still popular. Philosophers like Max-Muller and scientists like

Oppenheimer (father of Atom Bomb) were fascinated by Hinduism after studying Indology. When the first Atom Bomb was exploded in the deserts of New Mexico, a jubilant Oppenhemer greeted the news by chanting Sanskrit verses from the Bhagavad Gita.

It may not be wrong to conclude that even Adolf Hitler was influenced by the Tantric part of Hinduism. From where else, he picked up *Swastika* and his unique 'hand gesture' which resembled Hindu *Abhaya-mudra*? Anyway, that is something left for speculation!

Indr

Tutelary and weather god. Kafir [Afghanistan]. The brother of Gish and father of Disani and Pano. Probably derived from the more widely recognized Aryan god Indra, Indr is known chiefly from the Waigal and Prasun areas of the southern Hindukush. It is generally assumed that he was ousted from major importance by the god Imra. Indr is also a god of wine who owns substantial vineyards and is associated in south Nuristan with wine rituals (the annals of Alexander the Great suggest that he met with wine- drinking worshippers of Dionysos' in the Hindukush).

In the Ashkun region of south-western Kafiristan, a famous vineyard near the village of Wamais is sacred to Indr. Also Inder.

Indra (*possibly meaning 'mighty'*)

Origin Hindu [India]. Weather god.

Known period of worship circa 1500BC and possibly earlier until present day.

Synonyms none.

Centre (s) of cult none.

Art references sculptures in metal and stone; reliefs.

Literary sources Rg Veda and other texts.

One of the most important of the Vedic deities. It is uncertain if he originated as a weather god or as a solar deity. The *Rg Veda* identifies him with the bull and he is considered to be related to the

Hittie weather god Tesub. He is thus also god of fertility and war. In the later Vedas he is described as the son of Dyaus Pita and Prthivi. His consort is Indrani and his sons are Jayanta, Midhusa, Nilambara, Rbhus and Rsabha.

In later Hinduism he is a *dikpala* (guardian) of the eastern diection. 2. In Buddhism Indra is a *dikpala* with the colour yellow, but of lesser importance than the Hindu god.

3. In Jainism Indra is a head of various heavens but, again, of lesser importance.

Indra, the god of firmament and the king of the abode of gods, is probably the most colourful character in Hindu mythology. The ebb and tide of his career, the rise and fall of his power provides a very fascinating story to all, who are interested in the lives of Hindu gods and goddesses.

In the Vedas—rather early Vedic age-Indra stands as the top-ranking figure among gods. Still he is not equivalent to Omkar or Brahma because he has a parentage. His complexion is golden and sparkling; he rides on a golden chariot drawn by two red strong horses with thick and lowing manes and pointed tails. His pet weapon is the thunderbolt which he carries in his right hand; sometimes he is also represented having a big bow with long pointed arrows as well as a big hook and a net, in which he is said to entrap his enemies.

He is the ruler of the atmosphere and the weathers are at his command. Whenever and wherever he thinks proper Indra sends rains as well as thunders and lightnings. As a high-ranking god he had been shown as the preserver and rescuer of cows, priests and even gods. He once killed a demon named Vala, who had stolen cows so that milk may not be used by men for themselves or for religious ceremonies. He killed this demon and saved the cows. In the earlier Vedic period he is a very great warrior, who subdued the enemies of Aryans and conquered their forts. During his warfare against enemies of gods he was assisted by other lesser gods-especially Maruts. He has got more hymns of praise than other gods in Vedas and he was then widely worshipped for his kindness

and as the bestower of rains and the giver of fertility. He is shown to have a beautiful consort, who is named as Indrani.

In the post-Vedic period and during the age of Purans Indra falls from the front rank status and is given the lower grade in all respects. Though still the king of other smaller gods, Indra is much inferior to the holy triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv. He is still regarded as the controller of atmosphere, but only under the supervision of the Almighty. Indra in later ages is the ruler of only Swarg, the heaven where the gods live enjoying life in the company of beautiful *apsaras,* the female dancers. He is now shown having great weakness and big faults. He is shown even to have a lascivious character; indulging in sexual wrongs. He tried to seduce the pious wife of sage Gautama, named Ahliya. This enraged the sage, who cursed him to have a thousand wounds resembling female organ on his whole body. When he repented and prayed, these thousand wound marks were changed into thousand eyes; hence Indra is also called Sahasra Chakshu (the thousand eyed).

In the Ramayana comes the story that Ravan, the demon-king of Lanka, attacked heaven and fought against Indra. Indra was badly defeated by Ravan's son, named Meghnad, who since then was called Indrajeet. As Indra was taken captive by Meghnad, other gods under the leadership of Brahma, had to purchase Indra's freedom by bestowing on the demon the blessing of an immortal life. He is very much afratid to lose his throne of heaven and regularly sends beautiful female singing and dancing girls to disturb the penances of the holy men, who Indra thinks may dethrone him.

In the life of god Krishna, he presents himself as one whom the incarnated god teaches a great lesson: He pours incessant rains to drown the people of Brajbhumi, God Krishna raises the mountain named Goverdhan on his little finger and defeats the design of Indra. Again when Krishna goes to visit Swarg, he wants to carry the divine Parijata tree. Indra opposes it and fights. In the battle too Krishna defeats him and the tree is carried off.

Though Indra is not the object of direct worship in temples, he is

constantly appearing in all tales of religious scriptures as the king of lesser gods.

Indra is actually a position which the aspirant god attains if his divine conduct is beyond any blemish. According to the mythological details even a moral being or a man could get it, like king Nahush got once. But he fell from grace when he tried to lay hold on the previous Indra's wife. Hence whoever becomes the Indra has to guard his position by his good conduct.

Indrani

Goddess of wrath. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). Daughter of Puloman, a demonic figure killed by the god Indra, and the *Sakti* and consort of Indra. One of seven mataras (mothers) who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent. Also one of a group of eight *astamataras* personifying jealousy (also named Aindri in this capacity). In another grouping one of nine *navasaktis* or astral deities who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras.* Her attendant animal is either an elephant or a lion. Attributes: hook, rosary, Santana flower, staff and water- jar. One thousand-eyed. Also Aindri; Mahendri; Paulomi; Saci; Sujata.

Indukari

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Consort of the god Samba. Attribute: a shield.

Isa (I)

1. An aspect of Siva. Hindu (Puranic). Also a *dikpala* or guardian of the northeastern quarter, and an *ekadasarudra* (one of the eleven rudras). Rides upon a goat or a bull. Colour; white. Attributes: five arrows, axe, drum, fruit, hatchet, hook, lute, noose, rosary, staff. Three-eyed. 2. Guardian deity. Buddhist. A minor *dikpala* attended by a bull. Colour : white. Attributes: cup, moon disc and trident.

Issaki

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Depicted carrying a headless child. Also Kerala.

Istadevata

1. Generic title of a personal god. Hindu. The name given to a deity chosen by an individual for special worship in return for protection and spiritual guidance. Also the name give to a household icon.

2. Tutelary god. Buddhist, particularly in Tibet. The personal deity of one preparing for Tantric initiation.

Isvara

Epither of the god Siva. Hindu (Puranic). In Sanskrit designated the 'supreme god who rules the universe'. The generic title of a Hindu's personal high god. In Buddhism the name of a *yaksa* attending the eleventh *tirhankara.*

J

Jagannath (*lord of the world*)

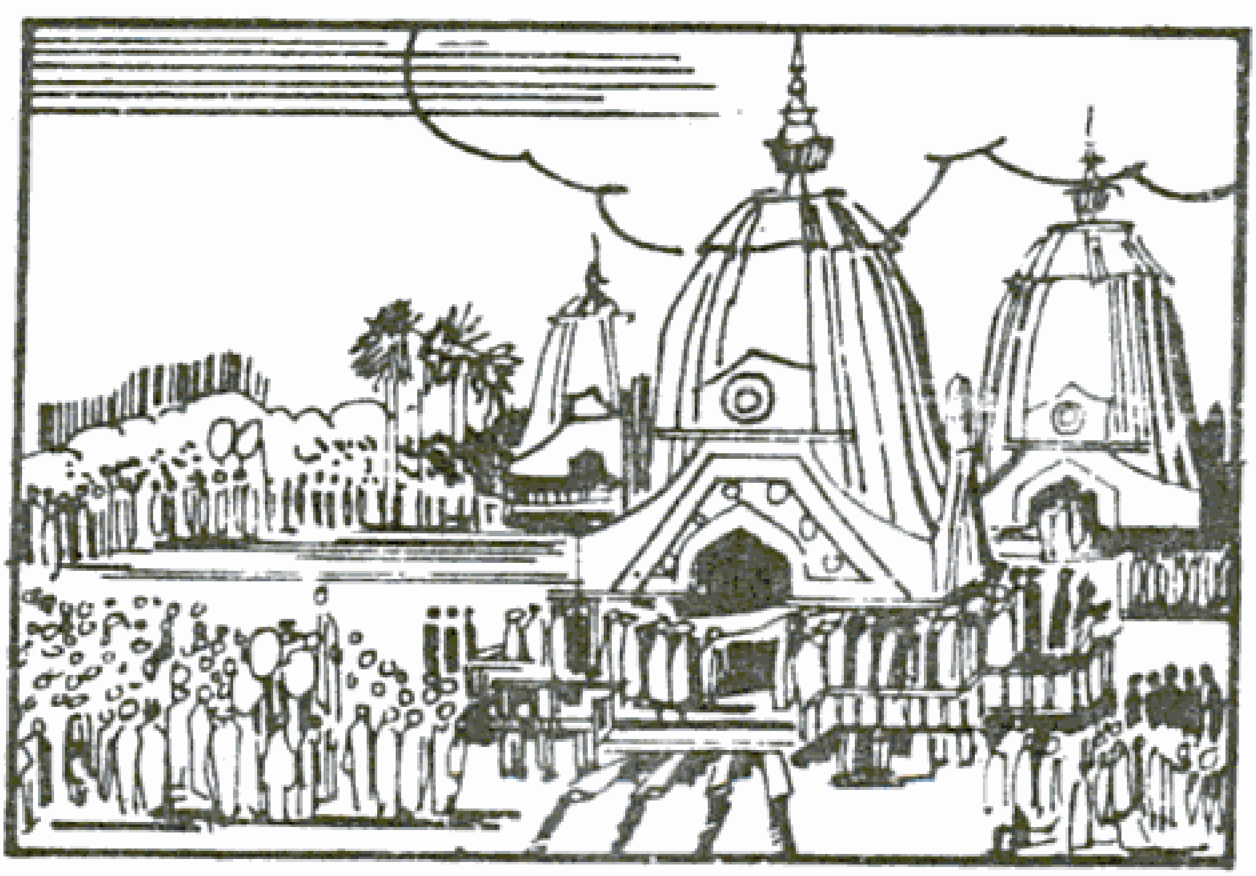
Origin Hindu (Puranic) [India]. Transmutation of the essence of the god Visnu.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD and probably earlier until present day. Synonyms Jaggernaut.

Centre (s) of cult Bengal and Puri (Orissa).

Art references bronze sculptures. Well-known wooden image at Puri. *Literary sources Ramayana* epice; Puranic texts.

Jagannath occupies an obscure position. His sister is Subhadra and his Brother Balahadra. He is depicted in hideous fashion as a monster with an enormous head and bulging eyes, but with no legs



and only the stumps of arms. According to legend, legend, when Visnu eas accidently slain by a hunter, his bones were placed in a box and Visvakarma, the Hindu god of artisans, was commissioned to create a new body to cover the bones. His agreement was conditional on no one seeing the work until it was finished. Krsna's curiosity got the better of him and the resultant half-finished freak was Jagannath.

In an unusual departure from normal ritual practice, the image of Jagannath is removed from his sanctuary at Puri for a week each year and aired in public view, Two festivals, the Rathayatra and *Snanayatra,* are dedicated to Jagannath and his siblings.

Jagannath, Lord of the world, is the name given to a particular form of Vishnu or to be more accurate that of Krishna. The image of this god has not legs and only stumps of arms; together with him are seated Krishna's brother Balram and their sister Subhadra. The latter two images also do not have legs and hands. These three images in the same form are worshipped in all Jagannath temples, situated mostly in eastern parts of India. But Puri, near town of Cuttack in Orissa State, is considered to be the real abode of Lord Jagannath and the chief centre of his worship is the great temple complex in that city. Thre big statues of Krishna, Balram and Subhadra are enshrined in this temple.

In is a great seat of pilgrimage for Hindus living in all parts of India. Thousands of people visit this place and on the occasion of two great festivals held there lacs of Hindus strong to have a glimpse of the Lord. These two festivals are known as Snaan-Yatra (Bathing festival) and Rath-Yatra (Car festival), held during the months of Jaisth and Asadh respectively. In the first the images are given a bath and in the second (the more important one), the image of Lord Jagannath is brought out upon a chariot together with the other two images. On this day the whole area surrounding the temple looks a sea of humanity. This chariot is pulled by thousands of pilgrims in the streets and the crowd is so dense that people are known to have been crushed in their attempts to touch or get near the chariot. The word 'Juggernant' in English language denotes the source of its derivation and the character of this festival.

The origin of these statues is in itself legendary. As mentioned in the narration of the life Lord Krishna, he was killed by a hunter. After sometime some people found his remains and put them in a box. Then Lord Vishnu directed one king Indradyumn to form the image of Jagannath and put into its belly these remains of Krishna. By doing this the king would achieve his salvation. The King prayed to God and asked whom he should contact to make such an image. He was then commanded to pray to Vishwakarma, the personification of the creative power and the great architect of this universe. Vishwakarma undertook the assignment of making this image on the specific condition that he would not be disturbed by anybody till he completed the work. After fifteen days the King could not contain his curiosity. Being impatient he went to Vishwakarma, who burst into rage at his impertinence. Vishwakarma went away leaving the image without hands and feet. The image had only the stumps. Later on King Indradyumna as a penance prayed to Brahma. Brahma said that the image would not be completed but he would make the image immortally famous. Brahma gave the image eyes and a soul and also acted as high priest at the time of installation and consecration of the image of Lord Jagannath.

All the three images are made ow wood and every twelve years the old ones are buried underground in an unfrequented part of the extensive temple compound. The original image made by Vishwakarma is said to be lying somewhere in a pool near the present temple.

Now about these two festivals of Snaan-Yatra and Rath-Yatra, during the first festival the three images are taken out and placed on a large terrace built in an open space near the temple. Here the Brahmins, surrounded by an immense concourse of spectators, bathe the god by pouring Ganga water on the head amidst the loud chanting of stotras (sacred hymns). After this the Brahmins wipe the deity dry and carry him back to the temple. Then start the worship ceremonies. At this time all the images of Jagannath throughout the country are subjected to the same ceremonies.

About the two weeks after this Snaan-Yatra, the Car festival is

held. Before the god is taken out of the temple to be placed on the chariot, the elaborate rituals of worship are performed. This chariot is in the form of an imposing tapering tower between thirty and forty cubics high. It has sixteen wheels, two horses and one coachman—all made of wood. The three images are put in an elevated part of the carriage. A very large crowd draws the chariot and the shouts of joy are loud enough to be heard oven at a distance of one mile Arriving at the appointed spot the three images are taken out and put in a place prepared for them. Here they remain for eight days.

Lord Jagannath's Rath-Yatra attracts huge crowds and such processions are being taken out in other parts of the country too on the same day.

Jalinprabha (*light of the sun*)

God. Buddhist. A *bodhisattva* or *buddha-designate.* Colour: red. Attributes: staff, sun disc and sword. Also Suryaprabha.

Jambhals (*devouring*)

God. Buddhis (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya, Ratnasambhava or Vajrasattva, or a collective emanation of the five *dhyanibuddhas,* he is the equal of the Hindu god Kubera. His Sakti is Vasudhara and the may stand upon a man or a conch. Colour: blue or white. Attributes: arrow, bow, cup, hook, lchneumon fly, image of Aksobhya in the hair, jewel, noose, other jewels, staff, sword and trident. Three-headed, each head representing one of the three named *dhyanibuddhas.*

Janguli (*knowledge of poisons*)

Snake goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Prevents and cures snake bite. An emanation of Aksohya. Also one of a group of dharanis (deification of Buddhist texts). Accompanied by a snake or other unidentified creature. Colour: green, white or yellow. Attributes: arrow, blue lotus, bow, image of Aksobhya on crown, lute, peacock feather, snake, staff, sword and trident. One or three-headed.

Jayakara (*victorious*)

God. Buddhist. Probably of Hindu derivation, he rides in a carriage

drawn by cockatoos. Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, bow, garland and wine glass.

Jayanta (*victorious*)

God. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). One of the sons of Indra, and one of the eleven *ekadasrudras* or forms of the god Rudra. Attributes: arrow, axe, bow, club, cup, drum, hammer, hood, prayer wheel, rosary, spear, trident and water-jar.

Jayatara (*victorious Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana).

Jaya-Vijaya (victorious)

Twin goddesses. Hindu (Epic and Puranic), Possibly forms of Durga accompanied by a lion.

Jnanadakini (*knowledge*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya and the *Sakti* of yogambara. Colour: blue. Attributes: axe bell, club, cup, staff and sword.

Jnanaparamita (*perfection of kenowledge*)

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. Spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: white. Attributes: the tree of wisdom and a jewelled banner.

Jnana Yoga

Jnana Yoga or *Darsanas* are known as the *Hindu philosophy.* There are essentially six systems of *Jnana Yoga*. All of them are based on Vedas and developed basing on the theory of reincarnation. Ali paths lead to salvation. The six systems of *Jnana Yoga* are as follows :

1. Samkhya 2. Yoga 3. Mimamsa 4. Vaisheshika 5. Nyaya 6. Vedanta. The Vedanta system is further divided into *Advaita* and *Dvaita* systems.

1. Samkhya System: It is the most ancient philosophical system in the world. This was founded by the sage Kapila. This system

recognizes no personal God. It sees the universe with the forces of Purusha (spirit) and Prakriti (matter).

2. Yoga System: Yoga is the word derived from the root word Yuj meaning 'to yoke' or 'to join'. Yoga system resembles Samkhya system. Its ideas are based on dualism (seeing the universe as two—(subject and object) and does not talk about a personal God. To some extent, it talk about a personal God. To some extent, it talks about God as an inanimate object with the word 'IT'. Raja *Yoga* and *Hatha Yoga* are the most important yogas.

3. *Mimamas System* : The leading exponents of this branch of philosophy are sages *Kumarila* and *Prabhakara.* The *Mimamsa* system is based on the avoidance of rebirth. *Mimamsa means* the *Start of Vedas.* The actual founder of this system is sage *Jaimini,* who was the disciple of sage Veda Vyasa. *Jaimini* wrote the book *Mimamasa Sutra* which is the most important authority of this system.

4. *Vaisheshilka System* : This means *Partcularity.* This is *The Atomic School of Hinduism.* This system was founded by the sage *Kanada* who wrote the book *Vaiseshika Sutra.* It teaches that the Universe is made of nine elements : earth, water, air, fire, soul, mind, ether, water, time and space.

There is no mention of God in this system. God is mentioned simply as *That.*

5. *Nyaya System:* This system was founded by sage *Gautama.* He wrote the book called *Nyaya Sutras.* This system is primarily concerned with the logical analysis of the world and its atheistic nature. This system resembles *Vaisheshika System.*

6. *Vedanta System* : *Vedanta* means the *End of Vedas,* indicating that this was written based on the Upanishads which came after the Vedas. The Mimamsa system was actually the start of the Vedas and was based on the Vedic ideology. The Vedanta System was founded by sage Badarayana (Veda Vyasa) who wrote the book called *Vedanta Sutra* or *Brahma Sutra.* According to this system, nothing exists except *Brahman.* The human problem is not SIN but ignorance. The ignorance of the true nature of oneself results in the

endless cycle of birth and rebirth.

Advaita Philosophy and *Dvaita Philosophy* are the two important branches that emerged from the Vedanta System. The greatest exponent of *Advaita Philosophy* is sage *Adi Sandkaracharya.* Through his commentaries on the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras, Sankara established the Vedanta System. The greatest exponents of the *Dvaita Philosophy* are sages *Ramanuja* and *Madhava.* Sankara's Theory of *Advaita* is that there is only one reality and that is known as the *Brahman*; Whereas *Ramanuja* and *Madhava* took a position that reality is two: Dependent and Independent. God is independent. Rest of matter and soul are dependent upon God and are controlled by the God.

Jnanavasita (*control of knowledge*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: whitish blue. Attributes: sword on a blue lotus.

Jvaraharisvara (*lord of fever*)

Plague god. Hindu. Associated with malaria, particularly in Bengal.

Jyestha

Goddess of misfortune. Hindu (Puranic and earlier). The elder sister of the goddess Laksmi, Jyestha personifies poverty and is depicted with a large belly and long nose. In earlier Hinduism she was worshipped particularly in southern India. Also a *naksatra* of evil influence; daughter of Daksa wife of Candra (Soma). Her animal is an ass. Attributes: arrow, banner with crow, cup, blue lotus, hair-ornament and staff.

K

Kadru (*russet*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the daughters of Daksa, consort of Kasyapa and mother of the *nagas* (snake demons).

Kala

God of death. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). An epithet of Yama and occasionally of Siva. Also the personification of time in the *Atharvaveda*.

Kalacakra *(time wheel)*

Tutelar god. Buddhist (Mahayana) and Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of yi-dam tutelary deities chosen on a basis of personal selection. Perceived as time in the form of a cakra (rotating wheel) and one who dominates the Hindu gods Kama and Rudra. *Sakti* with two to four heads. Colour: blue. Attributes: a large variety held in up to twenty-four hands. Typically four-headed.

Kaladuti (*messenger of death*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). May be accompanied by a horse. Colour: red. Attributes: cow head, cup, hammer and trident.

Kalavikarnika

Fever goddess. Hindu (Puranic).

Attributes include a cup or skull.

Kali (1)

Origin Hindu (Puranic) [India]. Goddess of destruction.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD, but known from much earlier times, until present.

Synonyms many epithets, also linked with Durga.

Centre (s) of cult chiefly in Bengal.

Art references sculptures in stone and bronze.

Literary sources Ramayana epic and various Puranic texts.

Kali is the most terrible and malignant aspect of the goddess Sakti (see also Durga) though the name Kali is an epithet applied to several goddesses. She is the central figure of the *sakta* cult in Bengal. Her consort is generally perceived as Siva. whom she aids and abets in his more malignant aspects. Also one of the *mahavidya* personifications of the *Sakti* of Siva. In her earliest form she may have been the personification of the spirit of evil.

She is depicted variously with long ragged locks, fang-like teeth or even tusks, lips smeared or dripping with blood and claw-like hands with long nails. Her tongue often protrudes. She has no special vehicle but may be seen dancing on a prostrate Siva. She possesses ten (sometimes as many as eighteen) arms and may wear a necklace of skulls, a belt of severed arms, earrings of children's corpses, and snakes as bracelets. Often she is half- naked with black skin. Kali is depicted wading through gore on the battlefield and drinking the blood of her victims. Frequently she holds a severed head in one her hands and a large swcrd in another. At cremation sites she sits upon the body of the deceased surrounded by attendant jackals.

There are also more bening aspects of Kali. She slaughters demons and sometimes her hands are raised in blessing. The conflict of her personality follows the widely held notion that out of destruction comes rebirth.

Kali is worshipped in Bengal during the *Dipavali* festival. In southern India she is worshipped as a distinct plague goddess associated with cholera.

Kali (2)

Goddess of learning. Jain. One of sixteen headed by the goddess

Sarasvati.

Kalika (*black*)

1. Goddess. Buddhist (Mathayana). Often depicted standing upon a corpse. Colour: dark blue. Attributes: cup and knife.

2. Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). A *Sakti* of Nirrti, and an epithet of Durga.

Kaliya

Minor serpent god. Hindu (Epic and puranic). One of the *nagas* in the endless conflict between good and evil, he poisoned the fresh water with his venom. The young Krsna revived all the life which had drunk from it and then almost destroyed Kaliya before taking the snake as one of his followers. By tradition he lives in depths of the river Yamuna.

Kalki(n) (*with white horse*)

Horse god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). Possibly the tenth *avatara* of Visnu. He rewards the good and punishes evil. The counterpart of the Buddhist deity Maitreya. Horses became associated with divine kingship in ancient India because of their speed of movement. Solar deities were perceived to ride horses across the sky and horse sacrifice became highly significant. Kalki is depicted either anthropomorphically or with the head of a horse and has four arms. He is attended by a white horse. Attributes: arrow, conch, prayer wheel, shield and sworld. Also Visnuyasas.

Kalki Incarnation

Prediction about the future events or happenings has always been a favourite endeavour of all the religious faiths. Whether it is the Resurrection or Rapture or the Kalki-Incarnation, each faith has imagined the onset of better times in its own way. This occurrence is the natural corollary to the concept that the noble values decay with the passage of times. The Hindu mind is basically rooted to the fact that the world always decays after its inception. Hence the First Age, the Satyayug, was the best period when the Dharma, represented by the holy bull, stood on its all the four legs. Then came the Treta Age in which the moral and spiritual conditions

deteriorated a bit and the Dharma lost its one leg. By the time the third age, Dwaper surfaced the Dharma lost its two legs. In the same sequence, the worst age is supposed to be Kaliyu or the present age when the Dharma-bull will be standing only on one leg. In each of these ages the imbalance created by the adverse conditions was to be set right by various incarnations of the Lord Almighty (believed to be Lord Vishru) in a variety of moral forms. 'Srimadbhagwat Gita' says that the Lord incarnates Himself whenever there is decline of the noble values and wickedness takes an upper hand. These incarnations come in the mortal forms choosing their manner of entry into the world according to the demand of times. Just after the Deluge He incarnated in the Fish and later in the Boar forms. Since Himyakashyap, the tyrant demon and father of Prahlad, was to be slain by a half-man-half-beast existence, He came in the Narsimha form, Ravan was to be slam by a man so Lord Ram incarnated himself as a human being.

And as it is expected the worse the period the more powerful would be these incarnations. That is, each passing age would demand a more potent incarnation to redeem the world. It is for this reason the preceding incarnation, like that of Lord Ram in Treta, was potentially less powerful than that of Lord Krishna in Dwapar—because of the progressively growing adverse conditions.

It is said that in the present age, Kaliyug, the moral conditions shall be touching their nadir and they would require the most potent incarnation to restore order in the world. That incarnation is believed to be Kalki-Avtaar or Kalki Incarnation.

This incarnation has been described in various ways by the sacred texts. As the future incarnation, Kalki will come at the end of the present Kaliyug when moral excellence no longer exists, the rule of law has disappeared and all is darkness. In some text he is described as holding a flaming sword, and in some as four- armed holding a sword, conch shell, wheel and an arrow, and in some others as a human having the head of a horse and holding attributes as above but with a club (gada) instead of an arrow.

The Mahabharat is more specific in its description of the Kalki-Avtaar. On being asked by Yudhishtar, the sage, Markandeya,

describes the Kalki Incarnation. He says that inspired by the Supreme Spirit, in a certain village called Shambhal, a son will be born in the house of a brahman named Vishnuyasha and this boy's name shall be Kalki Vishnuyasha. This brahman boy shall be an extremely powerful, intelligent and vahant personage. He shall get all weapons, armies, etc., at will Collecting a hughe army of brahman warriors he shall go about setting order of righteousness in the world. He shall not only re-establish the rule of Dharma but shall also herald the advent of the Golden Age or the Satyayug of the next cycle of time.

This incarnation shall also be with full potency. It is believed that a Poornavataar or an Lincarnation with full potency has sixteen 'kalaas' or phases. Five of these he shares with human beings and other animals—the five doors of perception—sight, hearing, small, taste and touch. Another four he shares with human beings—mind, heart, intelligence and the 'turyavastha' or transcendence of intuitive experience. The seven phases that follow are characteristic of a 'poornavtaar', an integral or all- inclusive avtaar. Grace or reward for effort that fails to be rewarded though it has come from the deserving; 'anugraha' or special Grace whether the recipient merits it or not; the power to create a new order of life in society, new status of consciousness in individual or new objects; power to support and sustain what is inherently good, which may happen to be defenceless; the power to destroy what is evil; the assumption of a form which whenever it is recalled mentally or in the presence of the Avataar himself, affording a solution to the problem that beholder has in mind; and the assumption of a 'name' which has a similar potency. Kalki Incarnation shall have all these above-mentioned powers to herald the Golden Age of peace and plenty—the Satyayug. Since Kalki will be an Age-making Avataar, he has to be that much powerful and potent.

Kama (Deva) *(desire)*

Origin Hindu (Puranic) [India]. God of carnal love.

Known period of worship circa 1000 BC. and probably earlier, until present. *Synonyms* Kama: Manmatha; Ananga. *Centre(s) of cult* various.

As god of love Kamadeva stimulates physical desire. The son of Visnu and Laksmi, or of their reincarnations Krsna and Rukmini, in which instance he is titled Kama. An alternative legendary beginning accounts that he rose from the heart of the creator god Brahma. His chief ally is the god of spring. Vasanta, his principal consort the goddess of affection, Rati, and he is attended by a band of nymphs, the *Apsaras.* Kamadeva is depicted as a youthful god with green or red skin, decked with ornaments and flowers, armed with a bow of sugar-cane strung with a line of honey bees, and arrows tipped with a flower. He may be three-eyed and three-headed and frequently rides on a parrot.

The consorts of Kamadeva are the goddesses Rati and Priti. Legend accounts that Kamadeva met his death at the hands of Siva, who incinerated him with flames from his middle eye. Kamadeva had inadvertently wounded the meditating god with one of his shafts of desire and had caused him to fall in love with Parvati. The epither Ananga (bodiless) is applied to Kamadeva in this context. Kamadeva is reincarnated as Kama, who in turn is reincarnated as Pradyumna, the son of Krsna. The god is invoked particularly when a bride-to-be departs from her family home.

Kamaksi (*of amorous appearance*)

Goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) [sourthern India and Sri Lanka]. A Sakti of Siva recognized locally at Kanchipuram, but also in her own right at several places in southern India. Also Kamatchi (Tamil).

Kamala (*lotus-born*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic).

Particularly worshipped in southern India. One of a group of *mahavidyas* or personifications of the *Sakti* of Siva, representing Maharatri.

Kama Sutra

Kama means the "desire for sexual gratification". As per mythology, *Kama Deva* (the God of *Kama* or Love) is a god with a bow and arrow and when he strikes someone with his arrow, that

person will develop sexual desires in him. The legends say that Lord Siva burned *Kama Deva* to ashes with the fire of his third eye for trying to arouse passion in him (Siva) for princess Parvati. Lord Siva later gave life to *Kama Deva* and he (*Kama Deva*) thus became Ananga (bodiless).

The most important Kama literature is *Kama Sutra,* written by Sage Vatsyayana around 4th century A.D. The book describes the daily routine of an ordinary man. It also describes pienics, drinking parties, games etc.

The book elaborately discusses the art of making love. All the things one can imagine about sex are described in this book. The author has gone to the extent of categorising different forms of embraces, kisses and types of women. The intention of the author may be to teach Man how to woe a woman to become his bride, but his writings are much against the fundamental ideas of Hinduism. Hindus do not even acknowledge this book as part of Hinduism since this book can lead to spiritual decline, rather than helping a man in his married life.

Kamdhenu

Kamdhenu, the sacred cow, is a part and parcel of Hindu mythology. She is the cow which grants all wishes and desires. She is the cow of plenty which emerged from *Samudramanthan* (the churning of the ocean) and taken by seven gods, who compose the constellation of the Great Bear in the sky. She is also called Surabhi, Shaval, Aditi and Kamduh. She is the mother of all cows.

According to mythological accounts, Brahma created the Brahmins and the Cow at the saem time—the Brahmins were to recite Vedas and scriptures while the cow was to afford ghee (clarified butter) for burnt-offerings in religius sacrifices. The cow is deemed to be the mother of gods and is declared by Brahma to be a proper object of worship. The unclean places are purified with cow-dung and in rural areas still the cow-dung is to be used to rub the ground of the doorway which is the first act in the morning.

Amongst orthodox Hindus she is worshipped on the first of Vaishakh, when the cow was created by Brahma. The milkmen

paint the horns and hoofs of their cattle yellow or saffron and bathe them in the river. 'Whoever kills a cow or allows another to kill it, shall rot in hell as many years as there are hairs upon his body'. A child born under unlocky stars is passed under the body of a cow to offset the effects.

Moreover cow plays a very important role in the cult of god Krishna. It follows the cowherd Krishna through his life on earth and also symbolises with its four legs the four Vedas of Hindus. Every part of cow's body has a religious significance. Its horns symbolise the gods, its face the sun and the moon, its shoulders Agni, the god of fire, and its legs the Himalayas. Even Mahatama Gandhi was a great advocate of cow's protection and called it the gift of God'.

Cow also symbolises Dharma itself. It is said to have stood steadily upon the earth with its four two feet during the Satyug (world's first age of truth), upon three feet during the Tretayug (the second stage of less than perfection), upon two feet during the Dwaparyug (the third stage of dwindling and disappearing perfection) and only on one leg during Kaliyug (the fourth and current age of decadence).

Kamini (*loving woman*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Kankar Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A *Sakti* who in later Hinduism become regarded as a saptamatara (mother) of evil intent. Known particularly from Bengal as a goddess who spreads disease.

Kantatman

Obscure god of medicine. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The twentieth of the thirty-nine minor *avataras* of the god Visnu and possibly the same as Dhanvantari, as he is said to be a carrier of nectar'. By different generalogy he has been equated with Pradyumna, the god of love.

Kanti (*desire*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The Sakti of Narayana.

Kapali (*wearing skulls*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the group of eleven *ekadasarudras* or forms of Rudra.

Kapalini (*carrying a cup*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Karaikkal Ammaiyar Local mother goddess. Hindu [Southern India]. Known from the town of Karikai as a deified ascetic who is depicted with an emaciated form. Attribute: playing cymbals.

Karai-Shin

God of ligthtning. Buddhist [Japan]. One of the deities grouped in Shintoism as the Rajin gods of thunder, storm and rain.

Karini

Inferior goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Karkota

Snake god. Hindu. One of a group of seven *mahanagas*. Colour: black. Attributes: rosary and water-jar. Three-eyed.

Karmavasita (*control of karman*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of twelve vasitas or goddesses personifying the disciplines spiritual regeneration - karma(n) is an act, rite or deed originating in the hope of future recompense. Colour: green. Attribute: a staff.

Karma Yoga

The word Karma is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Kri' meaning "to to". The word Karma is used in many senses in Hinduism. Here the meaning of Karma is work. We do Karmas all the time. When we beathe, it is a Karma. *When we think, it is a Karma*, the

Karmas we do dictate our Past, Present, and Future. According to Hinduism, all destined duties are good Karmas if they are duties popularly known as Svadharma.

According to Samkhya philosophy, Karmas are controlled by three forces. They are : Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. Tamas represents inactivity. Rajas represents activity. Sattva is the equilibrium of the two. Karma yoga involves properly employing these three factors, to do our work better.

As I said earlier, the different paths of God-realization in Hinduism are not airtight divisions, but they merge into each other. So Karma Yoga has a lot to do with Bhakti Yoga and Janana Yoga. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the Bhagava Gita deal with Karma Yoga.

Attaining freedom, by unselfish actions, "Nishkama Karma". Selfish actions retard our goal. Unselfish actions take us towards our goal. So Karma Yoga is the system of attaining freedom through selfless actions. A Karma Yogi may or may not believe in God or in any religious doctrine. Einstein, Father Damien and Mother Teresa are some of the Karma Yogis outside Hinduism.

The Gita allots three chapters and 113 slokas to explain Karma Yoga. Some of the important points are:

1. No man will reach a state a state of actionlessness (Nishkarmata) by shuning actions. 2. Action is the nature of all beings in creation. 3. He who controls his desires of the flesh and does selfless actions is an honourable man. 4. Do actions without seeking profit, because such actions will ensure salvation for you. 5. Look at me, I am God. There is nothing I have to do in the three worlds. There is nothing in the three worlds I need or I can't't get. Still I work all the time. 6. A man should do his own duty (Svadharma). A man will meet with disaster, if he does someone else's duty. Svadharma, however despicable it may be, is better than someone else's duty. 7. The senses are good. Mind is better than the senses. The soul is better than the mind. 8. In whatever form a man worships me, I will make his devotion steadfast in that form. Whatever path a man may take, it will finally lead him to me. 9. He who performs unattached actions surrendering them to me will be untouched by sin just like

water drops on a lotus leaf do not wet it. 10. Actions do not taint me nor do I have any desire for the fruits of actions. He who knows me in this way, no action is binding on him.

Karttikeya

1. Go. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A form of Skanda who was reared by the Pleiades stars and is generally represented therefore with six heads. (In Hindu mythology there are only six Pleiades, not the seven recognized in modern astronomy.) His Sakti is Karttiki and his attendent animal is a peakcock. Attributes: conch, hook, noose, prayer wheel, shield, spear, staff sword and 'wood people.

2. God. Buddhist, Equating with the Hindu god Sikanda. Colour: red. Rides upon a peacock. Attributes; cock, Sakti and staff.

Kartikeya, represented sometimes with only one face, is generally known as having six faces; is yellow-skinned; rides on a peacock; holds in his right hand an arrow and in his left a bow. He is widely known as the god of war. This god is also known as Skanda, Kumara, Mahasena, Guha, Agnibhoo, Tarakjeet, Shakti Dhuru. In southern India he is known as Subrahmanya.

In the Mahabharat and Ramayan epics this god is describescribed as the son of Shiv or Rudra. Sometimes his motherhood is prescribed to Ganga (hence Ganga-putra), and sometimes to goddess Parvati, the consort of Shiv. In some legends he is said to have been born without the intervention of a woman through fire (hence the name Agnibhu). This god is depicted sitting around the Shiv-Ling together with Nandi, the mount of Shiv.

The story of his birth runs thus as given in Kumar Sambhav.

Tormented by Tarak, the demon, all the gods under the leadership of Indra, went to the Creator to rid them off this monster. The Creator advised them that only the seed of Shiv can produce a fighter, who can defeat the demon. Shiv was then lost in deep meditation and even the god of lust, named Kama, could not awaken this god. Then the goddess Parvati, Shiv's wife, came forward to help the gods. Once Shiv's passions were aroused none

could bear his seed's energy. Agni alone could bear it by taking the seed into its mouth and thereafter transferring this seed to Ganga. The god Kartikeya so born is therefore called, Gang-ja or Agni-bhu. The child so conceived is also called Kumar—for ever young and chaste.

Another myth connected with his birth states that gods appealed to Shiv for help in repelling the attack of the demons. Shiv responded and assumed six faces, each with a central eye from which six parks sprang forward. These sparks fell into a lake said to be situated some fifty miles north-west of Madras. These sparks were transformed into six infants, nursed by the six mothers who comprise the Pleiades, the six Krittikas. Shiv's wife Parvati took the six infants into her arms. She hugged them affectionately but in the process squeezed the six children so strongly that they turned into one single body but with six heads. Reared by the six Pleiades (Krittikas), he is mostly called by the name of Kartikeya. He was made the Lord of war and the chief of gods' army. According to Mahabharat he defeated the demons Mahisa and Tarak.

His strength is immense. Once as a boy, he thrust his spear into the ground challenging anybody to pull it out or even to shake it. God Vishnu took hold of this lance and moved it a bit with his left hand. The result was disastrous; the whole earth shook and the seas, the forests, the mountains started shaking badly. Even the son of Hiranyakashyapu, Parahlad, who was the beloved of Vishnu and very strong, could not move it a bit and fainted while attempting the feat.

It seems that once in ancient times the worship of Kartikeya was much more wide-spread. Patanjali mentions about his images in homes and temples. The coins of Kushan kings bear his name and under the Gupta kings he was worshipped in the whole of northern India. He was also the favourite deity of Chalukya dynasty kings. In southern India he is still widely worshipped. Several deities of the south are associated with him, e.g., Murugan (the chaste boy), Velam (the spear-bearer) and Seyyavan (the red-one).

His story is related in Mahabharat, Shiv Puran and Kalidas's Kumar Sambhav. Kumar is shown riding on the peacock, the killer

of serpents.

A complementary story connected with his birth; though not directly with this god, is about the burning of the god of sex and lust, called Kama. As mentioned above the gods in order to awaken the sexual desire in Lord Shiv had assigned this job to Kama Dev. Kama Dev was highly flattered by all gods and he boasted that he could conquer the mind of Shiv within no time. Kama consulted his wife Ratee, who reproved him for this temerity but consented to accompany her husband and help him in disturbing Shiv's meditation. They set off together with Vasant (spring season's god) to Himalayas. Kama Dev pulled an arrow and threw at Shiv. The great Lord, smitten thus, awoke from meditation and shouted who had dared to interrupt his meditation. Looking towards south he spotted Kama Dev. In anger Shiv opened his third eye in the center of his forehead and thus reduced Kama to ashes. Taking pity at the woes and responding to the please of his widow, Ratee, Lord Shiv restored her husband but only as a mental image, representing true love and affection and not just physical lust. Hence the other name of Kama Dev is Ananga (the bodiless).

On the last evening of the month of Kartik, the clay image of this god Kartikeya is worshipped and then submerged next day in the river. At every great festival associated with mother goddess Durga, his image is also made and set up by her side. Many people, specially females worship this god to have a male offspring.

Kataragama

Tutelary god. Tamil [Sri Lanka]. One of four great national deities and equating to the Hindu god Skanda. Also Ceyon.

Katavul

Supreme god. Tamil [sourthern India and Sri Lanka]. The ultimate creator of all that exists in the world and the judge of humanity able to reward or punish at will.

Katyayani

Form of the goddess Durga or Parvati. Hindu (Puranic). Parvati, as the ascetic Kali, possessed a black skin. When Siva ridiculed her

she cast it off, and it was subsequently filled with the combined brilliance of the gods' to create Katyayani. Her attendant animal is a lion or tiger.

Kaumari

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The *Sakti* of Skanda (Kaumara) who in later Hinduism became regarded as one of a group of seven *mataras* (mothers) of evil intent. Also one of a group of eight *astamataras.* She embodies lack of envy or, alternatively, delusion. Her animal is a peacock. Attributes: arrow, axe, bell, book, bow, cockerels, lotus, spear, staff and water-jar.

Kaumudi (*moonlight*)

Goddess of the light of the moon. Hindu. The consort of candra

Kesava (*long-haired*)

Minor *avatara* of Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). His *Sakti* is Kirti.

Kesini (*hairy*)

Goddess, Buddhist. An attendant of Arapacana.

Khandoba

Form of the god Siva. Hindu (late). Khandoba is believed to have emerged as a deity with a distinct cultic following no earlier than the thirteenth or fourteenth century on Jejuri, near Poona. The god is generally regarded as one of several martial forms which Siva took to combat demons. His consort is the goddess Mhalsa, considered to be a form of Parvati. He is depicted bearing four arms and is useally mounted on a horse, but may also be accompanied by a dog. Attributes: bowl, drum, sword and trident. Also Makhari; Mallari; Martland.

Khasa (*itch*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Vedic). Daughter of Daksa consort of Kasyapa and a deity controlling spirits of forests.

Khasaparna (*gliding through the air*)

God. Buddhist. A variety of Avaloknesvara. Colour: white.

Attributes: image of Amitabha on the crown, and lotus.

Khen-Ma

Goddess. Buddhist [Tibet]. The female controller of the earth's demons, attended by a ram. Attribute: a golden noose.

Khen-Pa

God. Buddhist [Tibet]. The male counterpart of Khen-Ma, he controls the demons of heaven, attended by a white dog. Attribute: a crystal staff.

Khyung-Gai mGo-Can

Local god. Buddhist [Tibet]. Equating to the Hindu god Garuda.

Kirti (*glory*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The *Sakti* of Kesava. Attribute: water-jar.

Kollapura-Mahalaksmi

Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Six-armed. Attributes: club, shield and wine glass.

Korravai

War goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) Southern India and Sri Lanka). Worshipped in desert regions in southern India, thought to live in trees and equating to Durga. She has a son, Murukan. Also Katukilal; Korrawi.

Kotisri

Mother goddess. Buddhist. The so-called 'mother of 7,000 *buddhas.*

Kriya Yoga and Hatha Yoga

Krigy Yoga is a very advanced form of *Pranayama* taught by yogis in India. One of the greatest exponents of Kriya Yoga in modern times was the late Swami Paramahamsa Yogaṇanda. According to Swami Paramahamsa Yogananda, by practising *Krigy Yoga* one attains Cosmic consciousness.

Hatha Yoga is a yoga of Asanas or yoga postures practised for radiant health and longevity. In a way by practising *Hatha Yoga* one can make his/her body conditioned to meditate on God. Asanas or yoga postures help to loosen muscles and joints. They also promote free flow of energy throughout the boby. The yoga postures are also good for different internal organs and glands. It has been found that bodily postures can affect mental attitudes and mental attitudes can develop pain of pleasure in the body. By changing the pattern of breathing, one can actually change one's mental attitudes. Yoga postures are very valuable aids in the development of positive attitudes in man. ***Relaxation is the most important result of practising Asanas or yoga postures.*** Asanas should never be done under strenuous conditions. Those who practise *Asanas* regularly follow very strict moral, ethical and dietary codes. There are several types of *Asanas* and they should be done only under the direct supervision of a very able teacher.

Some of the most important *Asanas* practised by yogis throughout the world are as follows :

1. Shirshasana - standing on the head.
2. Sarvangasana - standing on the shoulders.
3. Chakrasana - this is a circular pose of the body.
4. Dhanurasana -body bent like a bow.
5. Halasana - body at a 90-degree angle.
6. Janushirasana - head touching the knee pose.
7. Garudaasana - body twisted like a bird.
8. Padahastasana - body twisted like a jack knife.
9. Sasangasana - body bent like a hare.
10. Sukhasana - sitting in easy pose.
11. Vajrasana - sitting in firm pose.
12. Siddhasana - sitting in perfect pose.
13. Kukkutasana - sitting like a hen.

14. Padmasana - Lotus pose (sitting).

15. Shavasana - lying down like a corpse.

Most yogis sit in Padmasana or Siddhasana when they meditate on God. Some even meditate lying down in Shavasana. There are still a lot more Asanas. All these Asanas are practised after bath, prayers and deep breathing exercises under the guidance of an able teacher.

Krishna (*the dark one*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) [India].

Incarnation of Visnu.

Known period of worship circa 300 BC or earlier until present.

Synonyms Kannan (Tamil). Many epithets.

Centre (s) of cult generally throughout India, but particularly Mathura. *Art references* sculptures generally bronze but also stone. Reliefs.

Literary sources Mahabharata epic, *Bhagavad-Gita* and *Bhagavata- Purana.*

Krsna is the eight and arguably the most important incarmation or *avatara* of the god Visnu. He appears inauspiciously in the Vedic texts, but grows in stature and popularity. Allegedly born at Mathura on the bank of the river Yamuna, he is the son of Vasudeva and Devaki, fostered by Nanda and Yasoda. He is a deity who epitomizes human aspirations and shortcomings together. Thus he is both a Hindu divine hero, and a drinker and womanizer. He has no legal consort but his chief mistres, a married woman, is Radha. He is reputed to have enjoyed as many as 16,000 such liaisons.

Almost certainly, Krsna originated as a fertility god of herdsmen and vegetation who became syncretized with the hero of the *Mahabarata* epic. In the *Bhagavata-Purana,* Krsna is also perceived as the embodiment of the cosmos-the vault of heaven is his navel, the stars his chest, the sky his eyes.

Krsna's incarnation was, by tradition, designed to save the world from the demonic king Kansa. He is particularly worshipped as a baby (Balakrsna) and as a youthful shepherd accompanied by Radha. He is seen as a skilled musician often depicted playing the flute at the sound of which nature pauses to listen, storms are calmed, rivers flow calmly and maidens are roused. The legends of Krsna's childhood depict him as a somewhat precocious child who plays tricks and ransaks kitchen jars of butter and curds. The incident with butter has been a popular theme for sculptures. As an adult he champions the struggle with the adversaries of mankind, the *nagas*, subduing the serpent Kaliya (see also Garuda). He may be seen standing on Garuda. Colour: black or dark blue. Attributes: flute, the hill of Govardhana on one finger, an ornament, prayer wheel and shepherd's staff. He may, on occasion, carry other objects.

Krishna, the god who delivered the message of Gita to Arjun, is worshipped in thousands of temples throughout India. As a lovable child, as a shrewd diplomat, as a great sage and even as a fearless man of action, Krishna's personality has fascinated for ages not only Indians but also thinkers of other lands.

Krishna's picture is depicted in so many styles; in fact Lord Krishna has probably been the subject of the most numerous masterpieces of art. Sometimes he is shown as a child eating butter-cake, at others he is seen dancing with maidens or playing on flute or advising Arjun in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, so on and so forth.

The story of Krishna should start with the marriage of his parents. He was born in the Yadav clan, a brave and virile people. There was a branch of this clan called Shoora and Vasudev, Krishna's father was their chief. At the same time there was another tribe living adjacently and their chief was King Ugrasen. The first born son of this King was Kans, a villainous character. Elders of the two tribes were anxious to forge an alliance. King Ugrasen's brother named Devak had a beautiful daughter named Devaki, who was married with Vasudev to ensure peace between the two tribes.

Kans was cruel, haughty and wicked. Narad, a sage, predicted that

the eighth child of Devaki would slay Kans. Hearing this Kans decided that not only the eighth child but all the children of Devaki should be killed immediately after birth. To implement his diabolical plan, Kans held both Vasudev and Devaki as prisoners in the palace.

This way six of Devaki's sons were killed one by one by Kans. The seventh son of Devaki was saved by her husband's kinsmen, who took away the child immediately on birth in a nearby town named Gokul at the house of his friend, Nand, where Vasudev's elder wife, Rohini, was living.

As the fateful day of the birth of the eighth child drew near, Devaki was full of anxiety. She had been told by a great sage that Lord Vishnu himself was going to appear in this world through her womb. On the other side Kans had also taken extra precautions against the birth of the eighth child. The guards were heavily armed and many more men were deployed.

As it happened, of the day of Krishn's birth rains poured heavily, storms lashed the streets and there was constant thunder and lightning. At this time Vishnu appeared in a vision to Vasudev and said he was coming and should be taken far away to escape the killers hired by Kans. Miracu lously the prison doors opened and the guards at the gate fell asleep. Vasudev carried the newly born Krishna across the river Yamuna to the other bank. In the other town this child too was also brought to the house of Vasudev's friend Nand. He and together with his wife his wife Yashoda welcomed the child in their own household. At the same time to hoodwink Kans another child was brought back by Vasudev to the prison. Kans did not spare the substitute child, though it was a girl and not a boy. In many of the pictures Yashoda is seen Krishna holding in her arms and earessing him while in others she is seen scolding the child Krishna for his mischievous pranks. Thousands of songs on the child-like plays of Lord Krishna have been composed and are being sung throughout India. People preserve at home child Krishna's image in stone, brass or other metal and worship it ever morning.

Continuing the story of his birth, the legend says that when the

news of the birth of a son to Nand and Yashoda spread in the town of Gokul a stream of people reached their house. Singing and dancing welcomed the arrival of the new child. Mother Yashoda crooned over her son. She rocked her son in his cradle just as Hindu women through so many centuries have continued to rock Lord Krishna on the day of his birth, called as *Janmashtami*. The customary worship today is done by putting a cucumber in the cradle which represents the birth of infant Krishna.

When Nand got the child's horoscope cast, the learned Brahmins declared that the child was destined to do great deeds and he would destroy so many demons. Thus starts the fascinating tale of the infancy days of Lord Krishna—the stories that describe his baby pranks, his capacity for mischife, the immense affection of his foster-mother, Yashoda, the endless love of the cowgirls for this child and also of his supernatural powers at this age. Time after time Krishna protects the cowherds from harm and defeats the forces of evil. In this way Krishna continues he early life—the life of a god born amidst the simple village folk.

The first demon challenging the life of Krishna is named Putna. She was a demon who killed small children by feeding them her breast's milk. This demon assumed the form of a beautiful girl and came to Yashoda's house. Enchanted by her fake beauty Yashoda allowed Putna to hold the baby and then to suckle him. Krishna fastened his tiny mouth to her breast and started sucking her very life out with the milk. Putna tried to push the child away but to no avail. This way the demon met her end and Yashoda found the child safe and sound sucking her breast. At the time of her death Putna regained her ugly shape of demon. The second attack on Krishna came from another demon, Saktasur (a demon in the form of a wooden cart). Child Krishna kicked this demon also and killed him.

When Krishna became five months old, he was attacked by Trinavart, the demon of storm and whirlwind. The demon seized child Krishna and whirled him into the air. Yashoda and other cowgirls with men-folk searched the child everywhere. On the other side, the child-god forced the demon down on the ground and

dashed him to death against a rock. After a while the searching team discovered Krishna playing on the chest of the dead demon. Filled with great joy Yashoda picked the child and hugged him to her bosom.

A sage was called to give names to the two children of Vasudev, brought from Mathura to Gokul-one nurtured by Rohini, the first wife of Vasudev and the other fostered by Yashoda, the wife of Nand. This sage two children the names of Balram and Krishna. Balram was also given six other names but the sage declared that Krishna, being born in Vasudev's house, was to be called Vasudeva though his names were numberless as he was the incarnation of God and had been born to remove the ills of the world. The other child too was a part of Vishnu and was the incarnation of Sheshnag. Thus they learnt about the true character of both the children but preferred to remain silent and continued treating Krishna as their son.

Both the brothers grew up at Gokul. When Krishna started walking he indulged in his naughty pranks: stealthily entering the houses of cowgirls and stealing their cream, curd and butter. Though Krishna was sometimes caught by them yet by his innocent talks he always outwitted them and they went back bursting into laughter. Once Yashoda became very angry and tied him to a mortar. Hearing a loud crash Yashoda came running and found Krishna had dragged the mortar between the trunks of two trees, pulled them down and was quietly sitting between them. As the legend goes two youngmen by the names of Kuber and Nal had been imprisoned in these two trees and Lord Krishna had released them by this action.

By this time Nand and Yashoda left Gokul and had settled in a forest region called Brindaban. Krishna was now five years old. A demon named Vatsasur turning himself into a cow mingled with the herd. His presence was recognised by Krishna, who seized the demon-cow by the hind legs, whirled it round his head and dashed it to the ground. He was then confronted by another demon, Bakasur, who attacked in the form of a crane. This huge bird opened its peak and engulfed Krishna. The incarnate Lord then tore its beak in two. Krishna was later on attacked by a snake- demon,

Ugrasur. It sucked the Lord in its mouth. Krishna expanded his body to such an extent that the snake burst into tiny bits.

At the age of eight Krishna did another amazing feat. Calling his friends, Krishna reached the river Yamuna. In the river there was a dangerous whirpool, in which lived the giant snake, named Kaliya. The Lord and his cowherds started playing ball. A solitary *Kadam* tree stood by the bank and Krishna climbed it. One cowherd threw the ball towards Krishna but it fell in the river. Krishna plunged into the river to pull out the ball. Kaliya, the snake, detected that a young boy had entered his domain. It began to spout poisonous substance and encircled Krishna in its coils. Nand and Yashoda with so many others were highly alarmed and came to the bank of the river. Yashoda in agony was just going to jump in the river herself when Krishna came upon the surface of water playing his flute and standing upon the head of Kaliya. He had subdued the mighty snake with his superhuman strength.

Another phase of Krishna's life at this stage is the mad love of cowgirls for this charming boy. As Krishna grew up, he exuded charm and attacted everybody. Even the married cowgirls found his beauty irresistible. Playing on his flute Krishna enchanted these girls. In the later centuries' accounts probably during the tenth and twelfth century, a cowhered girl named Radha came into great prominence as the constant lover and companion of Krishna. She was the daughter of Vrishbhanu and was married to Ayaan. This woman fell madly in love with Krishna and became immortal. Now her image can be seen standing side by side with Krishna in most of the temples. In all the stories of Krishna's yough radha is given the most prominent place and in dances, known as Raas-lila dances. Radha is invariably shown dancing together with Krishna while all other cowgirls are only seen moving in circle around the two. These days this episode is given a philosophical meaning stating that Radha represents the soul while Krishna represents God. Thus Radha's love means yearning of the soul for merger with the Almighty.

Amongst the other exploits of Krishna during those days is one concerning Indra, a very powerful god during early Vedic period

but later reduced only as a chief of smaller gods. Jealous of Krishna's fame, Indra being the king of skies, called upon clouds to rain down in torrents at Brindaban. Facing the undearable downpour from above the cowherds and other people of the region appealed to Krishna for relief. Fully alive to the situation, Krishna calmed their fears and raised the Goverdhan hill overhead with support of his little finger. Indra himself poured torrential rains for seven days but Brajbhumi's people remained dry under the shelter of the Goverdhan hill. Indra was compelled to relent and admitted that in the shape of Krishna Lord Vishnu had himself appeared on the earth. He was pardoned and returned to his kingdom of heavens.

Notwithstanding all these pranks, feats and frivolous deeds of Krishna, the real reason for his birth was that of ridding this earth of the vicious tyrant Kans. This king in his search for the child who was destined to kill him slaughtered many children. Krishna too had been subject to so many attacks but he survived each one by his miraculous powers. One day, however, a sage confided to Kans that his true enemy was alive. Kans in consultation with his councillors hatched a plot to decoy both the brothers, Balram and Krishna, to Mathura. A special festival of armed combats was proclaimed. It was rightly anticipated that the two brothers would becoming with other cowherds. When they came the wrestlers of the king would throw them down and kill them. Kans sent for Akrur, the chief of Yadavs and a leading member of his court. He briefed Akrur about his intentions. Akrur was a good man and he agreed to go overjoyed at the thought of meeting the Lord. He reached Brindaban and revealed to Krishna the intentions of Kans. Krishna agreed to accompany him to Mathura together with his brother Balram.

When Krishna and Balram reached Mathura with Akru, the whole city thronged to have a look at the two brothers, whose reputation had run much in advance to this city of Mathura. The next day Kans had fixed for the commencement of a wrestling match and of other feats of strength.

Arena for the competition was richly decorated and citizens from

Mathura and nearby villages had thronged to witness the events. Krishna was denied access by stationing a ferocious elephant at the gate. Krishna killed the beast and entered the area carrying the tusks in his hands. King Kans conveyed to them that hearing the tales of their valour, he wanted to witness their feats of strength.

The two mighty wrestlers of the court, named Chanura and Mushtika were let loose against the two brothers. In the match the two giants were badly defeated and likewise a few other fighters of king Kans were mauled by the brothers.

At this grand show all danced in joy while Kans felt very much afraid in his heart. In rage Kans shouted, "Kill these two sons of Vasudev and their father. Also put to death all who have side with my enemies." Lord Krishna jumped on the dais where Kans was sitting and catching him by the hair, dragged him down. In the battle between the two Kans was killed by him. Then eight younger brothers of Kans attacked Krishna but they were slain by Balram. After this Vasudev and Devaki were released from the prison and they were filled with joy to meet their victorious sons. Lord Krishna then touched the feet of their foster father and mother, Nand and Yashoda. He said, "You two have done more than real parents could do." He gave them the best of presents and bade farewell. This way ended the first part of Lord Krishna's life.

The second part of life of of Krishna appears in the context of great war between Kauravs and Pandavs, the princes of Hastinapur. Pandavs were the first cousin of Krishna. On hearing the news of death of Pandu, the husband of his father's sister Krishna approached Akrur and said to him, "It is learnt that after the death of their father, King Pandu, the five brothers, Yudhishtra, Bhim, Arjun, Nakul and Sahdev are living together with their mother, my aunt Kunti, in the palace of king Dhritrashtra of Hastinapur. Please go there and find out about their welfare. I have heard that the blind king Khritrashtra is under the influence of his sons and is not treating the sons of his brother in a fair manner."

From here onwards the life of Lord Krishna is interwoven with that of the history of Pandavs. Coming to the Mahabharat we find Krishna's life and doings in a different light. The slain king of

Mathura, Kans, had married two daughters of Jarasandh, the mighty ruler of Magadh. After the death of Kans, the widowed queens went to Jarasandh and informed him of the tragedy. He took a big army and invaded Mathura. Krishna and Balram with their soldiers came and met their foe. The army of Jarasandh was defeated though his life was spared by Krishna. The whole city welcomed the two brothers with great joy. For the protection of Mathura Krishna thereafter built a strong fortress and wall were erected around the city.

At that time the ruler or Vidarbha was Bhishmak, who had a daughter named Rukmini. This beautiful princess hearing the adventurous stories of Krishna had fallen in love with him. The elder brother of Rukmini wanted to marry his sister to Sishupal, the king of Chedi. The princess secretly sent a letter to Krishna through an emissary. In this letter she requested him to come and save her. Krishna also learnt from this emissary the day when the princess was to be married to Shishupal.

On the appointed day the inteded bridegroom entered the city with great pomp and show. The poor princess Rukmini was disappointed no to see her rescuer approach there. When she had lost all hopes the emissary stealthily entered Rukmini's apartments and informed her of Krishna's arrival together with his brother, Balram.

In the morning Rukmini, with her escorts, proceeded towards the temple of Ambika for prayers. Krishna on his chariot was waiting on one side. He with a sudden and swift move took her on the chariot by his side and rushed towards Dwarka. The chiefs who had assembled for the wedding gave a hot pursuit but Krishna and Balram together with other Yadav tribe chiefs conferred on them a crushing defeat and they had to retreat.

Lord Krishna entered Dwarka with Rukmini, who was married with him formally there. Though there are legends about sixteen thousand wives of Krishna, Mahabharata speaks of only one other wife, named Satyabhama.

In the epic of Mahabharata Krishna appears first in the Swyamvar

(marriage ceremony) of Draupadi, the daughter of king Drupad of the State of Panchal. The stage was set at Panchal for the marriage of princess Draupadi. Royal princes had come from far and near to win the hand of this beautiful girl. It was declared by king Drupad that he would give his daughter in marriage only to that prince who would hit the set target with his arrow. Five Pandav brothers also entered the arena. None could hit the mark while Arjun succeeded in hitting the mark. At this victory feat of Arjun, the princes who had assembled their felt humiliated and became ready to give a fight to Arjun and his brothers. Here Krishna intervened and persuaded the asembly not to indulge in any unjust action. He succeeded pacifying the angry contenders. Draupadi was eventually married to all the five brothers, who in those days were living under the guise of Brahmans.

After Draupadi's marriage, Krishna is seen as taking active part in the marriage of Subhadra, his sister, Arjun loved her and wanted to take her as his wife. Arjun, after consultation with Krishna, carried away Subhadra in his chariot as other family members were opposed to this alliance.

After sometime Yudhishtra with his four Pandav brothers came out of their out of their disguise and started ruling over their kingom. But until Jarasandh, the mighty and cruel King of Magadh, was not subdued, the sovereignty of Pandav brothers could not remain unchallenged. Jarasandh had got numerous princes as his captive. Krishna challenged Jarasandh and killed him in the fight. He thus fortified the supremacy of the Pandavas and also relieved people of an oppressive ruler.

Nor Yudhistra arranged for a big Yajna (sacrificial cermoney), in which all the rajas were duly invited. Here the Pandav brothers gave the first place of honour to Krishna. This was highly resented by Sishupal, the king of Chedi state. He started abusing Krishna in filthy language. In the fight that ensued Krishna killed Sishupal; according to legends he beheaded Sishupal by throwing his Sudarshan (Divine wheel at him.

At the success of this sacrificial ceremony, Pandavas first cousin, Duryodhan, son of Dhritrashtra who was the uncle of Pandav

princes, grew jealous. He challenged the Pandav brothers to a game of dice. Shakuni, the maternal uncle of Duryodhan, was the villain of the piece; he was the master in deceitful manouverings. As the game proceeded, Udhistra became more and more engrossed in it and palyed heavier and heavier stakes. At each succeediong loss he became desperate and after losing his kingdom he even put his wife Draupadi at stake. When he lost her too the evil winners wanted to dishonour Draupadi, but Krishna intervened and saved her honour. As per mythological accounts he saved her through his miraculous powers. However as a result of this defeat and as per conditions laid down in one stake, the five Pandav brothers had to leave the kingdom and remain in exile for thirteen years.

Eventually Pandavs after completion of their exile requested for the return of their kingdom. Krishna tried his best to avoid the war by acting as envoy on behalf of Pandavs. Kauravs under Duryodhan refused to budge an inch. In this great war of Mahabharat Krishna acted as the charioteer of Arjun. In fact Krishna had offered both the sides a choice. Each might have the choice of either having him as an adviser who would not actively engage himself in the battle or of having his army men as fighters in the field. Kauravs chose to have the army while Pandavs opted for Lord Krishna. It was in the capacity as a charioteer of Arjuna, when the Lord Krishna had recited to Arjun the world-famous divine song of Bhagvad Geeta. Preparations for the big war began and allies were sought on all sides. Many fattowed.

The army of Kauravs was commanded in succession by their great-uncle Bhishma, Drona, their military preceptor, Karna, the half-brother of Pandavs and Shalya, the King of Madra. All the warriors fell in succession and at length Bhima and Duryodhan fought in single combat with maces. Duryodhan had his thigh broben and was mortally wounded. At the end of this war their remained alive only five Pandavs. After a reconciliation with Dhritrashtra, the blind father of the Kauravs, Yudhishtra was crowned the King. However, he was greatly depressed and highly troubled at the loss of all kith and kin. After his coronation the horse-sacrifice cer emony was performed by Yudhishtra. Later on the Pandav brothers too left the kingdom and retired to the Himalayas.

In this context what interests us regarding Lord Krishna is his divine message to Arjun. In Bhagwat Geeta, Krishna points out that to a warrior nothing is nobler than a righteous war and declares that one should do his duty without any attchment for results. He explains to Arjun the three noble paths. First in that of Yoga (knowledge) which means yoking mind and body to achieve perfect unity beyond the limits of thoughts and language; second is that of Dharma (righteousness), which means religious duties and customs, while the third is that of Bhakti (devotion). The last one of devotion implies love to a personal God and complete surrender to Him. This is the path that commands the strongest approval of Krishna. He says "Have your mind in Me, be devoted to Me, to Me shall you come ... Though I am the unborn, the changeless Self ... to save the good and destroy evil doers, to establish the rightk I am born from time to time.

Numerous heroic incidents intervened before the time came for Krishna to leave the human body and return. Legend says that the gods, headed by Brahma and Shiv approached Krishna begging him to return as the latter's mission on earth and been completed. Krishna promised the gods that within seven nights he would complete the destruction of Yadavs and return to his perennial home. Bad omens started appearing in Dwarka; strong hurricanes, screaming birds wailing cats and dogs, howling jackals and headle spirits drew the attention of all Yadavs in Dwarka. Krishna advised the residents to leave Dwarka and move to Prabhasha, a site further inland. Krishna had now made last preparations for their annihilation. On the way the Yadavs drank heavily and struck one another with fatal blows. In a short time no Yadav was left alive except mighty Krishna and Daruka, his charioteer. Only those left behind at Dwarka were spared to continue the race of this tribe. Balram, the brother and companion of Krishna, went to the sea shore, performed yoga and left his body returning to his real self, viz., Shehsa Nag, the serpent of eternity. Krishna seated himself by a fig tree and spread his left leg turning the sole of his foot outwards. He was by mistake struck with a poisonous arrow by a number and thus prepared himself for the final departure. He instructed Daruka, his charioteer, to go to Dwarka and break the

news to the residents. Finally, the occean came up and swallowed the city of Dwarka engulfing everything except the temple.

The entire legend of Krishna's life and his leelas (deeds) provide a great opportunity for presentation of events through architecture, poetry, music and dancing. The many facets of his endearing activities have fired the imagination as no other incarnation has done. He is a naughty boy, a romantic lover, a heroic warrior, a shrewd diplomat and a great 'Sanyasi' (ascetic) He is not only the pivotal character of an epic but also the author of one of the most sacred books of the Hindus-a treasure house of philosophy and a fountation of solace to the troubled hearts. It has been said that in Krishna we have the fullest and the most perfect manifestation of the Divine.

Krsodari (*thin-waisted*)

Goddess. Hindu. An emaciated form of Camunda, a personification of famine. She stands upon a corpse. Attributes: club, iron rod, skull and trident.

Krttika (s)

Minor goddess (es) of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Strongly malevolent *naksatra* (s) consisting of the six stars in the Pleiades constellation who become nurses of the god Skanda. (In Hindu mythology there are only six Pleiades, not the seven recognized in modern astronomy.)

Ksama (*patience*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the daughters of Daksa. Attribute; trident.

Ksantiparamita

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. One of the *paramitas*. Spiritual offspring of Ratnasamhava. Colour: yellow. Attributes: jewelled banner and white lotus.

Ksetrapala

God of assage. Hindu (Puranic). Form of the god Bhairava specifically designated as a guardian deity of doorways. Also

regarded as a tutelary deity in Saivite temples. Stands upon a lotus and possesses a number of attributes.

Ksitigarbha (*womb of the earth*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Known extensively from northern India to China and Japan. One of the group of female *baddhisattvas* or *buddha*-designates. Colour: yellow or green. Attributes: book, bowl, jewel, staff and water jar. In china she is recognized as an underworld deity, Di-zang. In Japan she becomes a guardian deity of passage, Jizo.

Kubera (*misshapen*)

1. God of riches. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). He was originally the head of the *yaksas* spirits of the forests, but by Puranic times was associated with wealth and productivity. He is also a *dikpala* guardian of the northern quarter. The son of Pulastya and Idavida, his consorts include Yaksi, Vasudhara and Vriddhi. Identified with the city of Alaka. He is depicted as a dwarfish figure riding upon a Brahman or a chariot. Colour: white. Attributes: generally carrying a purse, but occasionally with various other items. Also Kuvera, Kauveri.

2. God of riches. Buddhist-Lamaist (Tibet). One of a group of *dharmapala* with terrible appearance and royal attire. Also a *dikpala* or guardian of the northern quarter. Colour: yellow. Attributes: axe, banner, club, cup, hook, Ichneumon disgorging jewels, noose, reliquary and occasionally a trident.

Kubjika (*hump-back*)

Goddess of writing. Hindu.

Personification of the thirty-two Tantric syllables.

Kubuddhi (*stupid*)

Minor goddess. Hindu. One of the consorts of Ganesa.

Kuladevata (*family god*)

Generic name of a household god. Hindu. The god is chosen by a family to their guardian deity and they all assemble at his temple,

as and when necessary, for worship. Also Kulanayaka.

Kuladevi

Goddess. Hindu. The female equivalent of a Kuladevata.

Kulika (*of good family*)

Snake god. Hindu. One of a group of seven *mahanagas*. Attributes: rosary and water-jar. Three-eyed.

Kulisankusa

(*having an axe and a good*)

Goddess of learning Jain (India). One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Kulisesvari (*lady of the axe*)

Goddes. Buddhist (Mahayana). Often depicted with a cores. Colour: white. Attribute: a staff.

Kumari (*virgin*)

Goddess. Hindu. Generally recognized to be an epithet of Durga. Worshipped a a famous temple on the southernmost tip of India at Cape Comorin. Also known in Nepal, where a small girl provides an earthly incarnation of the goddess.

Kumbha Mela Festival

It is the greatest Hindu pilgrim festival that takes place once in three years. It is a riverside religious festival rotated between four places: at Allahabad (on the banks of Ganges, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati), Hardwar (Ganges), Ujjain (Sipra) and Nasik (Godavari). The festival that is held in Allahabad every 12 years is known as Maha Kumbha Mela. Taking a bath in those rivers during the Kumbha Mela is considered to be a great spiritual act. Adi Sankaracharya himself had given a lot of importance to this festival and exhorted holy men the meet during the Kumbha Mela for free exchange of views. This Mela attracts lakhs and lakhs of people right from Digambaras (naked Jain saints) to Sannyasis who live high in the Himalayan caves throughout the year. In 1954, at the

Kumbha Mela at Allahabad the crowd was estimated at many millions and such was the rush that more than 500 people were killed in a stampede.

Kumhbha Mela celebration is a part of mythology. It is said that once upon a time, the Devas (gods of heaven) and Asuras (demons) fought for a Kumbha (pot) of *Amrita* (lite-giving elixir) that came out during the churining of the milky ocean. Then Vishnu saved the *Amrita* from the demons and gave it to the Devas. During their stay on earth, the Devas rested the pot at four places, thus sanctifying the four sites of Kumbha Mela. That mythological incident started the famous Kumbha Mela.

Kun Rig (*knowing all*)

God. Buddhist [Tibet]. Four-headed form of Vairocana. Attribute: prayer wheel.

Kuntu bXam Po

Head of pantheon. Bon (pre-Lamaist) [Tibet]. The chief god in the Bon pantheon, he engendered the world from a handful of mud scraped from the primeval waters and created all living things form an egg.

Kurma (*vatara)*

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The second *avatara* of Visnu, Kurma appears in the form of a tortoise which acts as a pivot for the mountainous churning rod the gods employ to make ambrosia from the primal sea of milk after the flood. Kurma is depicted with a human torso surmounting a tortoise shell. Visnu is said to have appeared in this form in order to recover some of the possessions lost during the deluge. Attributes: club, conch, lotus and prayer wheel. Also the name for a vehicle of various deities.

Kurukulla

1. Goddess of boats. Hindu. A Tantric deity generally depicted in a boat made of jewels. Also goddess of wine.

2. Goddess, Buddhist (Mahayana). The *Sakti* of Amitabha. Usually of terrifying appearance. Attributes: arrow, bow, flower, hook, noose rosary and trident.

L

Laghusyamala (*lightly dark coloured*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Puranic). Attributes: lute and wine glass.

Laksmana (*with auspicious marks*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A half-or younger brother of the god Rama. The son of Dasaratha and Sumitra, his consort is Urmita. He often stands to the left of Rama and may be depicted holding a bow (see also Satrughna). Colour: golden Attributes: bow and ornaments.

Laksmi

Orgin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) [India]. Consort of Visnu.

Known period of worhip circa 300 BC and earlier, through to present times. Synonyms Sri-Laksmi; Sri-Devi; Kharani (earth); see also Sita.

Centrel (s) of cult no temples, but tevered generally throughout India.

Art references sculptures generally bronze but also stone. Reliefs.

Literary sources ramayana and *Mahabharata* epics; Puranic literature.

A major Hindu goddess who originated perhaps as a mother goddess but who now represents wealth and prosperity and epitomizes the later Hindu (Brahmanical) notion of the active female principle of Sakti in a male deity. According to the *Ramayana*, she arose from the primal Hindu sea of milk. Identified

as the consort of Visnu from cirea 400 AD onwards, she is generally depicted as a beautiful golden-skinned woman possessing four or more commonly two arms. She stands or rests on a lotus which may be watered by two attendant elephants. Another favoured portrait finds her washing Visnu's feet as he reclines on the thousand-headed serpent Sesha, an action which is said to bring Visnu dreams. She is perceived also to emerge as the black-skinned and destructive Kali. Many attributes, but most commonly a lotus.

Laksmi embodies the model Hindu wife, faithful and subservient. She may be depicted on the knee of Visnu's *avatara* Narayana as Laksmi-Narayana. She is reincarnated with each of his other avatars—thus beside Rama she becomes Sita, sald to have been born from a furrow, and with Krsna she is first Radha, then Rukmini. She is worshipped particularly at the start of the business year in India. In the *Divali* (Feast of Lamps) on the last day of the dark lunar period towards the end of October or early in November, every household lights a lamp in honour of Laksmi. She is also propitiated by gambling.

Lakshmi

Goddess Lashmi in the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses is personified as the goddess of fortune and also as the embodiment of loveliness, grace and charm.

She is depicted seated on a lotus flower though sometimes she is also seen as standing on a lotus. In her pictures gold coins are seen dropping down from the palms of this goddess of prosperity. The story of the birth of goddess presents an interesting reading.

Her emergence in the world is connected with a famous Hindu myth called *Samudramanthan* (churning of the ocean). This relates to the legend how with great efforts the ocean by churning was made to give up all its treasures and benefits to the world. The churning was a colossal affair and only by the efforts of Vishnu could this enterprise be successfully concluded. Vishnu advised gods to make peace with the *danavas* (demons) and the enlist their co-operation in the venture. In return for his help the demons were

to receive a share of the sacred *amrit* (ambrosia) which would emerge from the ocean and make them also immortal.

The gods chose Mount Mandra as a churning rod around which they coiled the serpent Vasuki to enable them to turn it. The gods held the tail and the demons the head while Vishnu took the shape of a tortoise (the second avatara) to serve as the base for the churning rod, i.e., the mountain of Mandra. As one churns the milk to produce butter out of it, the following most precious articles were received from the ocean by this process: (1) Surabhi, the cow of abundance, which was given to seven lower- status gods; (2) Varuni or Sura, the goddess of wine; (3) The celestial tree, called *Parijata,* which fulfils every desire, this was planted by god Indra in his garden; (4) Rambha, the apsara (the heavenly dancer), who became the progenitor of all *apsaras*; (5) *Chandra* (the moon), which was taken by Shiv and adorned on his head; (6) Bhanwantri, the celestial physician with his vessels containing medicines; (7) a container holding *Amrit* (ambrosia); (8) Kaustubha, the most precious stone, which came to the lot of Vishnu; (9) Airavat, the winged elephant, which Indra took as his mount; (10) Uchchaisravas, the white horse with a black tail which was taken by Bali, the demon; (11) *Shankha,* the white conch shell, which was taken by Vishnu: (12) *Vish* (poison)—it was the most effective fiery substance which no one except Shiva could swallow. For the sake of gods and humanity Shiva swallowed this substance. It left a visible blue spot on his throat and for this reason Shiva is also being called as Neel Kanth (the blue throated Lord). Last emerged Lakshmi or Sri, the goddess of wealth and beauty. Sri was taken by Vishnu as his wife. This is how Lakshmi was born and became the consort of Vishnu.

Born seated on the lotus flower, she is aldo called Padma. She as the most faithful companion of life, has always appeared as Vishnu's partner in every incarnation of his. When Vishnu came on earth as Vaman (the Dwarf), Lakshmi came to earth as a Lotus (Padma or Kamla); when he came here as Parsuram, Lakshmi followed him as his wife Dharni; when Vishnu appeared incarnated as Ram, she came here as Sita; and when Vishnu appeared as Krishna, Lakshmi came in two shapes, earlier as Radha and later as

his wife Rukmini.

Lakshmi has other names like Loka-Mata (World's mother); Chanchala (the fickle fortune); Jaladhi-ja (the oceanborn); and Hari Priya (beloved of Vishnu).

In mythology she, whenever associated with some part of the body of a person signifies different gifts. When she is staying at the feet, she bestows the gift of a house, when on the thigh, she gives wealth; when in the bosom, she gives a luck child; when in the genitals, a very lucky wife; when on the heart, she gifts the fulfilment of wishes; when around the neck, the result is meeting with loved ones or with some lost relatives; and when in the face, the goddess bestows beauty and grace.

This goddess is sometimes represented with four arms but more often only with two. She has no temple exclusively set apart for her but always appears only as a consort of Vishnu. Still she is regularly worshipped in every shop and home—specially on the day of Diwali festival she is worshipped alongwith Ganesh in almost all Hindu business houses. Many people indulge in gambling too on that night, apparently to find out how their fortunes shall work in the coming year.

In some pictures goddess Lakshmi is also shown seated with Vishnu on the divine eagle, named Garud holding a snake in its claws. Whatever the representation, this goddess is invoked to bless the devotee with good things of life and if somebody suffers any loss in business, it is said that the goddess Lakshmi has left his house. Her figure is sometimes depicted on the doors of homes to bring good luck and to drive away evil influences. Interestingly enough bad luck is personified as Alakshmi, the sister of Lakshmi. In Bengal goddess Lakshmi is depicted on earthen vessels and worshipped on the day just after the Durga Puja. She is also often being worshipped in a basket or a pot used as a corn measure, painted red. This basket or pot is decorated with flowers. As the same is filled with unhusked rice she manifests herself in the shape of seedlings grown in the winnowing basket.

Sometimes this goddess is shown as being one with Lord Vishnu,

when then is called Lakshmi Narayan. This conjoined deity denotes that in his supreme state Vishnu is one with his consort, who represents his power and energy.

Last Days of Lord Krishna

After the Mahabharata war, Lord Krishna took queen Gandhari for a tour of the battlefield of Kuruskhetra to see the dead bodies of her 100 sons. After witnessing the horrible scenes, she cursed Lord Krishna: "On! Krishna, you are the cause of this war. If you had not participated in it, my children would be still living today. Krishna, you and your family will perish in a similar manner." Hearing the curse of queen Gandhari, Krishna said: *Thank you mother, I eagerly look forward to that day.* Lord Krishna said so because his own family was becoming a burden to mother earth, due to their evil actions and so warranted extinction.

Lord Krishna went back to his island kingdom. Dwaraka, after the coronation of Yudhishtira, the first of the Pandavas. One day as the great Saptha Rishis (seven ever-living masters) were travelling through Dwaradka, a few of the Yadava youngsters thought of making fun of the great seers. They dressed up a sixteen-year old boy as a pregnant girl and they asked the seers when the girl would deliver and what would be the sex of the child. In one voice, the great seers replied: "This girl will deliver a metal club and the whole Yadava community will perish by that club." Saying so, the Saptha Rishis vanished into thin air.

The young Yadavas laughed and laughed not knowing about the impending danger. Whoever heard of a boy delivering a club? After few hours, lo and behold! the boy delivered an ugly black metal club. The frightened youngsters immediately took the club to Ugrasena, one of the top men of Yadava clan. Ugrasena had the club ground into powder and thrown into ocean where it became reed pollen. The pollen came back to the shore and bacame long knife-like grass. One spear-head piece that remained from the club which was thrown into the sea was devoured by a fish. A fisherman by name Jaras happened to catch that fish and when he cut open the fish he was astonished to find a strange metal piece. He presented that piece to a hunter who made the tip of an arrow out of that.

In the meantime, Lord Krishna knowing everything that has happened, summoned sage Narada, his greatest devotee, and told him that the time has come for all Yadavas including himself to be destroyed to lighten the burden of mother earth.

He said that he himself would be killed and that he would go back to Vaikunta as Lord Vishnu. He said that with the annihilation of Yadavas, he had fully accomplished the purpose of his Avater. One day the Yadavas held a big celebration on the seashore. Suddenly a feud erupted among them and they started attacking one another with the long knife-like grass.

The fight among the Yadavas became so violent and in a matter of a few hours, all the members of the Yadava clan dropped dead on the seashore. After coming to know about the death of the Yadavas. Balarama, the brother of Lord Krishna, gave up his life by jumping into the sea and giving up life by a special yogic method. Lord Krishna went to the forest and lay down under a tree. At that time, a hunter came along and saw Krishna's toe which he mistook for a rabbit and struck him with his arrow. The all-knowing, all-powerful Lord Krishna started bleeding profusely. The hunter seeing the calamity he has caused prostrated before Lord Krishna and begged for Krishna's mercy. Krishna smiled and told him that he did absolutely nothing wrong and he (Krishna) was actually obeying the unwritten Karmic Law, for in his last life, he (Krishna) has killed the hunter in a cunning manner, when the hunter was hunter is a cunning manner, when the hunter was the monkey-king Bali and Lord Krishna was the geat Lord Rama. Lord Rishana then asked the hunter to go and inform everyong in Dwaraka that he (Krishna) has killed the hunter in a cunning manner, when the hunter was the monkey-king Bali and Lord Krishna was the great Lord Rama. lord Krishna then asked the hunter to go and inform everyone in Dwaraka that he (Krishna) was leaving his body and Dwaraka would go inder water a few hours after his (Krishna's) departure. So saying Lord Krishna left the physical body and went back to Vaikunta as Lord Vishnu.

After Lord Krishna's departure from earthly life, Dwaraka went under the sea. It is said that Lord Vishnu takes the form of Krishna,

whenever a devotee worships him with intense faith.

Lasya (*dancing girl*)

Mother goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the group of *astamataras* (mothers). She is generally depicted dancing the *lasya* dance. Colour: white. Atttribute: a mirror. Also the generic name of a group of four goddesses, including Gita, Mala, Nrtya and headed by Lasya.

Laukika-devatas

Generic name for a group of deities. Hindu. Gods known from local folklore as distinct from those of the Vedic texts.

Law of Karma and Reincarnation

Hindus believe in life after death. They also believe in the idea, *As a man sows so shall he reap.* That is the basis of Karmic Law. To put it in modern scientific terms, Hindus believe that *every action has a reaction.* There is no such thing as action without any result. Every action, even every thought produces a reaction. Hindus believe that every thought and every action is weighed on the scales of eternal justice. The Law of Karma is one of "Cause and Effect". It works in the scientific world as well as in the moral world. These unwritten Karmic laws are universal and we can but obey these laws. These lows act in similar manner in similar circumstances. For instance, whenever you put your hand in fire, you automatically burn your fingers. This happens at all times and at all places, to the newborn as well as to a Physicist who might have done ten or fifteen years of research on fire alone. *Nobody can get away from the claws of Karmic law,* because by nature we all do *actions all the time.* Even those who sit idle are doing actions with their mind, even though their actions will be fruitless and idiotic. The doctrine of *Karma* has started since the days of the Rig *Veda* and it is very well-explained in the Brihadaranyaka Upanished.

According to Hinduism, the body alone dies, the soul never dies. But the path the soul takes is decided upon by the past actions which are popularly known as Karmas.

The actions of the former body do not die with the body. As I said above, *past actions* are attached to the soul and they decide the path of the soul's travel. So if you are born rich or poor, it is because of your actions in your previous life. If you are born with disease that also is the result of your past actions done in past lives. After death, the soul carries a heavy *load of karmas* and seeks an *ideal body* to be born in again. If you had lived as a rotten individual in your last life, then the soul will take birth in a home where people will be leading rotten lives. If you had lived a pious life, then you will be reborn in an ideal home where both parents will be pious and happe.

According to Hinduism, the soul continues this journey with a heavy load of Karmas from one life to another until it exhausts all Karmas by undergoing pain or pleasure sensations in the body. The different methods of God-realization provide easy ways to put an end to this drama of having pain or pleasure sensations in the body. Then the individual woul which is popularly known as Jivatman will merge with the Absolute soul or infinite power popularly known as Paramatman. This merging process is known as salvation.

According to Hinduism, every thought however insignificant it may be, is counted. Every thought we entertain circles around us. A thought never dies. It may lose its strength in time, but it never dies completely. If you repeatedly think about the same thing, then that thought becomes a *Powersource.* If you repeatedly think that you will get into an accident, then *your wish will be fulfilled.* You will get into an accident. It was your powerful negative thoughts that resulted in an accident. At the same level, if you develop prosperity thoughts in you, then your life will change dramatically, even if you are a pauper at present.

Believe me, Jesus Christ spoke volumes when he said: "Love thy enemy." (st. luke 6-27). Here he was teaching people the importance of powerful thoughts of love. *The love Christ was speaking of is the love without motive, love that has nothing to do with carnal feelings. It does not even involve touching and kissing.* By sending thoughts of love to your enemy, you will become a

generator of love. Most probably your enemy may refuse to accept your thoughts of love. In that case, those powerful thoughts of love. In that case, those powerful thoughts of love will come back to you like a boomerang; you will become a fortress of love. The thoughts of hatred works exactly in the same manner.

If you hate someone and you harbour that thought again and again you will become an embodiment of hate. In course of time, you will find even your best friend loathing your presence. Knowing the power of vengeful thoughts, Mahatam Gandhi said: "Fight without Malice." We have the right to fight injustice without hating the personalities or circumstances involved.

A baby is born in the dry deserts of Ethiopia; another baby is born in the luxury of Buckingham Palace. Both are innocent babies. One suffers from malnutrition and diseases, whereas the other grows up in luxury. What a paradox! Son, tell me now, is there another answer?

God will never punish us. God has created man near to perfection and has given him the *Free will to decide whatever* he wants. *God never interferes in man's decistions. There is no such thing as being cursed.* We oursolves make our lives miserable or happy. Even in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna never tried to influence his disciple Arjuna's free will. Lord Krishna, like an adviser, only discussed will. Lord Krishna, like an adviser, only discussed with Arjuna (his disciple) the various options he could take in his life. Just think, Christ even allowed his apostles to deny him at the hour of crucifixion. So it is stupid to say things like 'Revenge of God', etc.

Hindus believe that even God is bound by the law of Karma once he takes human form. For example, when God came down as Lord Krishna, he had to be killed by a hunter because he had killed the hunter in his previous life in a very cunning manner. (In his previous life, when God came down as Lord Rama, he killed the monkey-king Bali by attacking him from the rear.) The Yadavas, the blood-relations of Lord Krishna, were also killed since their collective actions warranted their extinction.

Hindus believe that when God came down as Jesus Christ, he took over the Karmas of all his disciples and thousands of devotees around him. Then to fulfil the Law of Karma, he allowed himself to be be crucified. The all-knowing, all-powerful Christ could have easily (with one glance) transformed the whole Roman army into his obedient devotees.

Instead he even refused to answer the questions of the Roman Governor Pilate. His statements during the Last Supper showed thatr he was dictating his own fate by crucifixion. He did not have even aniota of hatred towards Judas. Instead he showed compassion and love towards everyone including the Romans who accused him and allowed himself to be abused, tortured and finally crucified. Why? The only answer is that the all-knowing, allpowerful Christ was obeying the Law of Karma, the unwritten law of the Universe.

Lha

Generic term for a deity. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Also the title for a deity in the old Bon pantheon, equating to the Sanskrit term *deva.*

Lha-Mo (*the goddess*)

Goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [tibet]. Coming from the old Bon pantheon and equating with the Hindu goddess Sridevi.

Locana (*the eye*)

Goddess. buddhist (Mahayana). The *Sakti* of a *dhyanibuddha* (spiritual meditation *buddha*), generally Aksobhya or Vairocana. Colour: blue or white. Attributes: cup, prayer wheel and lotus with one or more staves. Also Buddhalocana.

Lokapala

Gods. Hindu. See Dikpala.

Lokesvara (*lord of the world*)

Generic name for a group of deities. Buddhist. These are thought to be a syncretization of Hindu and Buddhist deities and include such gods as Siva, Visnu and others which have come to be defined as

forms of a primeval buddha or *dhyanibuddha*. The *lokesvara* are usually represented by a small figure, identified as Adibuddha or Amitabha, which rests on the head of the main statue. Also a group name for the many forms of the Buddhist deity Avalokitesvara.

M

Madhukara (*honey maker*)

God. Buddhist. Derived from a Hindu deity and equating with Kama. He rides in a chariot drawn by parrots. Colour: white. Attributes; arrow, bow and wine glass.

Magha

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolen *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Mahabala (*very strong*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A fearsome emanation of Amitabha and a dikpala (guardian) of the north-western quarter. Colour: red. Attributes: jewel, snakes, sword, tiger skin, trident and white fly whisk. Three-headed.

Mahabja

Snake god. Hindu (Puranic). One of a group of seven mahanagas.

Mahabharata

The Mahabharata consists of episodes, stories, 110,000 couplets or 220,000 lines in 18 Parvas or sections. They are Adi-parva, Sabha-parva, Vanaparva, Virata-parva, Udyoga-parva, Bhishma-parva. Drona-parva, Karna-parva, Salya-parva, Sauptikaparva, Stri-parva, Santi-parva, Anusasana-parva, Asvamedhika-parva, Ashrama-parva, Mausala- Mahapnasthanida-parva, Swargarohana-parva. Apart from these 18 sections there is a section of poems in the form of an appendix with 16,375 verses which is known as Harivamsa-parva. So totally there are 19 Parvas

even though some saints do not consider the last section as an important Parva. Mahabharata thus is the longest poem in the world...The Bhagavad Gita is a part of the Mahabharata.

It is very difficult to narrate the story of the Mahabharata in a few words. Anyway let me try to narrate it to you in brief. Lord Brahma is born out of the navel of Lord Vishnu. Atri was Brahma's son. Soma was the son of Atri. Buddha was the son of Soma. Pururavas was the son of Soma. Ayus was the son of Pururavas. Yayathi, Dhushyanta, Kuru and Santhanu were born in the lineage of Ayus.

King Santhanu had a son from mother Ganges, known as Gangeya, or Devavrata popularly known as Bhishma. After the birth of Bhishma, mother Ganges separated from King Santhanu. Santhanu on his part fell in love with a woman named *Satyavathi* (of the fisherman tribe). Sathyavathi's father made Bhishma take a vow of cellivacy throughout his life, in return for his daughter's hand in marriage to King Santhanu. From Sathyavathi, King Santhanu had tow children namely, Chithnangada and Vichitravirya. They married two daughters of the king of Kasi, namely *Ambik*a and *Ambalika. Chitrangada* was killed by a Gandharva (celestial being) and *Vichitravirya* died of lillness. Suddenly the country was left without a ruler. So the Queen Sathyavathi summoned her son sage Veda Vyasa (through sage Parasara) to impregnate both the princesses. Princess Ambika gave birth to Dhritarashtra. Princess Ambalika gave birth to a son named Pandu. Sage Vyasa also impregnated a servant girl who gave birth to Vidura. Pandu, though the younger prince became the king since his elder brother Dhritarashtra was blind. He married princesses Kunti and Madri and from Kunti he had three sons namely Yudhishtira (also known as Dharmaputra), Bhima and Arjuna. From Madri he had Nakula and Sahadeva. All five children of Pandu were collectively called Pandavas. Dhritarashtra married princess Gandari and had 100 sons and one daughter. The eldest son's name was Duryodhana and the daughter's name was Dussala. King Pandu had an accidental death. So Dhritarashtra was crowned as the king. But he couldn't rule. He was totally under the influence of his eldest son Duryodhana. When the Pandava brothers came to stay in Hastinapura, the capital, Duryodhana tried to annihilate them in many ways. Finally, the

feud between *Kauravas* (Duryodhana and his 99 brothers) and Pandavas (five sons of Pandu) finally resulted in a fierce battle known as the Mahabharata war. Lord Krishna sided with the Pandavas in the war. In the war all Kauravas were killed. After the war Yudhishtira became the king. Some years later Lord Krishna along with his clansmen called Yadavas left this world. Immediately after that Yudhishtira and his brothers handed over the kingdom to prince Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna and left for heaven. This in brief is the great Mahabharata Epic.

Mahacinatara (*Tara of Tibet*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana) and Lamaist [Tibet]. An emanation of Aksokhya and, in Lamaism, a fearsome form of the Vajrayana goddess, Ekajata, who may be depicted with up to twelve heads and twenty-four hands. The stands upon a corpse. Attributes: arrow, axe, blue lotus, bow, cup, image of Aksobhya on crown, knife, skull, snake, staff, sword, tiger skin and trident. Three-eyed.

Mahadeva (*mighty god*)

God. Hindu (Puranic). An important epithet of Siva with three heads (two male, one female) signifying the three aspects—Aghora (right), Saumya (centre) and Sakti (left). Attributes: axe, bell, hook, mirror, noose, staff, sword, tree and trident. Also identified as a manifestation of Siva and one of the supreme deity.

Maha-Ganapati

Elephant god. Hindu (Puranic). This form of the god Ganesa possesses ten arms instead of the more normal four and may have a goddess, Buddhi or Siddi, seated on the knee.

Mahakala (*the great death*)

1. God. Hindu (Puranic). A violent aspect of Siva. His *Sakti* is Mahakali. Rides upon a lion. Colour: black. Attributes: five arrow, axe, Brahma-egg, club, cup, rosary of skulls, staff and trident. Three-eyed. Also considered to be a form of the god Bhairava in which context he is a guardian in which context he is a guardian of the faith.

2. Guardian god of tents and science. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet].

Derived from the Hindu god Siva and an emanation of the five *dhyanibuddhas*. Also one of a group of dharmapalas with terrible appearance and royal attire. A deity of riches. He treads on the god Vinayaka, or on a man, a corpse, or on two elephant-headed men. Colour: black, blue or white. Attributes: Mainly elephant skin, prayer wheel and trident, but may hold various other objects.

Mahakali

1. Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

2. Form of the goddess Kali. Hindu. Also a Sakti of Mahakala. Attributes: conch, cup, head-dress, hook, knife, noose, rosary of skulls, staff, sword, water-jar and wheel.

Mahakapi (*great ape*)

God. Buddhist. Epithet of the Buddha in a previous incarnation appraring as an ape.

Mahamanasika (*great-minded*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Mahamantranusarini (*following the great sacred text*)

Guardian goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of five *maharaksa* (protectresses) who are thought to be personifications of amulets or *mantras*. Also an emanation of the *dhyanibuddha* Ratnasambhaava, alternatively of Aksobhya. She is a guardian of the west, south and eastern quarters according to separate traditions. Colour: blue, black, green, white or red. Attributes: most commonly noose and staff. From four to twelve arms; may be three-headed.

Mahamataras

Group of goddesses. Hindu.

Personifications of the Sakti of the god Siva.

Mahamayuri (*great daughter of the peacock*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An extremely popular deity and an

emanation of Amoghasiddhi. A female *bodhisatva* or *Buddha*-designate. Also one of a group of five *maharaksas* (protectresses) who are thought to be personifictions of amulets or *mantras*. Colour: green, red or yellow. Attributes: alms bowl, arrow, banner, bow, fly whisk, image of Amoghasiddhi on crown, jewel, mendicant, peacock feather, prayer wheel, sword and water jar. Three-eyed and may occasionally appear three-or four-headed.

Mahanaga

Snake god. Hindu. A group of seven deities identical with a group of seven *nagadevas*.

Mahapadma (*great lotus*)

Snake god. Hindu. Attributes: rosary and water-jar. Three-eyed.

Mahaparinirvanamurti

God. Buddhist. The depiction of the Buddha lying in *nirvana* (paradise).

Mahaprabhu

Tutelary god. Orissa [India]. The local supreme delity of the Bondo tribe.

Mahapratisara (*great protectress*)

Guardian goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of five *maharaksas* (protectresses) who are thought to be personifications of amulets or mantras. A guardian of the *dhyanibuddha* Ratnasambhava. Colour: yellow. Attributes; arrow, axe, banner, bow, conch, image of Ratnasambhava on crown, jewel, noose, parasol, prayer wheel, reliquary, sword, staff and trident. Three-headed and three-eyen.

Mahapratyangira (great goddess whose speech is *directed westwards*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of the *dhyanibuddha* Aksobhya. Colour; blue. Attributes: hook, image of Aksothya on crown, noose, red lotus, sword and trident.

Maharaksa (*great protectress*)

Group of guardian goddesses. Buddhist. Personifications of

amulets or mantras. Common attribute: a parasol.

Maharatri (*the great night*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Associated with Kali and Kamala.

Mahasahaspramardani (*the thousand-fold destroyer*)

Goddess. Buddhist. An emanation of Vairocana, and one of the *maharaksas*. Colour: white. Attributes: partcularly noose, prayer wheel and sword, but also depicted with other objects including image of Vairocana on crown. May be four-headed.

Maha-Sarasvati

1. Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). An emanation of Laksmi. Attributes: book, hook, lute and rosary.

2. Goddess. Buddhist, A variety of Sarasvati. Depicted upon a lotus. Colour: white. Attributes: garland of pearls and white lotus.

Mahasitavati (*great cold one*)

Guardian goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of five *maharaksas* (protectresses) who are thought to be personifications of amulets or *mantras.* Also an emanation of the *dhyanibuddha* Amitabha (or sometimes Ratnasambhava). A guardian of the north or west quarter. Colour: red, yellow or green. Attributes: arrow, axe, banner, book, bowl, image of Amitabha on the crown, lotus, noose, peacock feather, staff, sword and trident. Three-eyed and may be three-headed.

Mahasri-Tara (*of great beauty*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Amogasiddhi. Depicted seated upon a moon. Colour: green. Attributes: image of Amogasiddhi and lotuses.

Mahasthama (*prapta*)

(*he who has attained great power*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A *dhyanibodhiarttva* who personifies great wisdom. Colour: white or yellow. Attributes: lotus, six lotuses

and sword. (May have no attributes present.)

Mahavidya

Collective name of a group of goddesses. Buddhist (Mahayana). Ten personifications of Sakti as the femaleness of siva, associated with the possession of Knowledge.

Mahayasa (*most glorious*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Mahesvari

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A *Sakti* who in later Hinduism became one of a group of seven *mataras* regarded as of evil intent. Also one of eight astamataras. In another grouping one of a group of nine *navasaktis* who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras,* Attributes: antelope, arrow, axe, bow, club, drum, prayer wheel, staff and trident.

Mahui (*earth*)

Minor goddess of sacrifice. Hindu (Vedic). She is invoked to appear on the sacrificial field before a ritual, and is identified with the act of prayer. Usually associated with the goddess Sarasvati.

Mahisa (*buffalo*)

Demonic god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Depicted most frequently in the form of a buffalo, but he also confounds the gods by changing himself into many other animal guises. He is eventually slain by the goddess Devi in the form of Mahisasuramardini.

Mahisasuramardini (*slayer of the buffalo demon*)

Form of the goddess Devi. Hindu (Puranic). Appearing from the fourth century AD onwards, this goddess is a *durga* form of Devi. She possesses up to twelve arms holding an assortment of weapons and may be seated on a lion. According to legend, the form arose in response to the threat from the demonic Mahisa who was eventually slain by the goddess Devi with his own sword. Attributes: axe, banner, bell, bow, club, conch, drum, hook, lizard,

mirror, noose, prayer wheel, shield, sword, staff and trident. Three-eyed.

Mahodadhi (*the great ocean*)

Minor g‹ ldess. Buddhis (Mahayana). An Attendant of Duddhakapala.

Maitreya (*the loving one*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. Bodhisatva or buddha-designate.

Known period of worship circa 500 BC to present.

Synonyms none.

Centre (s) of cult pan-Asiatc. Art references metal and stone sculptures, paintings.

Liteı ary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of the most popular deities of the Mahayana and Hindayana sects of Buddhism. He originates from the yellow mantra syllable MAIM in the Tusita heaven. He is also regarded as a *manusibuddha* or future human *buddha.* He equates with Kalkin in Hinduism and is perceived as a happy, rubicund figure of benevolent character. He has no *Sakti* and his attendant animal is a lion. Colour; gold or yellow. Attributes: five *dhyanibuddhas,* flower, prayer wheel, shrine (in the hair) and water-jar. May be three-eyed or three- headed. He may also be identified symbolically by white blossoms. Also Mi-lo Fo (Chinese).

Mala (*garland*)

Mother goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of *astamatara* deities. Colour: red or yellow. Attributes: garland of forest flowers, or of jewels.

Malhal Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of seven *Saktis* who in later Hinduism became regarded as *saptamataras* (mothers) of evil intent. Particularly known in Bengal as a bringer of disease.

Mamaki (*greedy*)

Goddess. Buddhist. The *Sakti* of ratnasambhava or Aksobhya. Also a *bodhisattva* or future *buddha*, originating from the blue *mantra* MAM. Colour: yellow or blue. Attributes: cup, flowers, jewel, knife and staff.

Manasa

Snake goddess. Hindu. The daughter of Kasyapa and Kadru and the sister of the lord of serpents, Vasuki. She is also a gracious aspect of Parvati. Known particularly from Bihar, Bengal and Assam. She stands upon, or is shaded by, a seven-headed snake. Attributes: snake and water-jar.

Manasi (*spiritual*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Manavi (*descended from Manu*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

sMan-Bla (*physician*)

God. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the more popular medicine-*buddhas* and possibly derived from Persian light-religion. Attributes: fruit and water-jar.

Mandhata (*thoughtful*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Minor *avatara* of Visnu. One of the 'lords of the universe'.

Mangala (*auspicious*)

1. Astral god. Hindu. Personification of the planet Mars. Depicted by a chariot drawn by eight red fire-horses. According to some authors Mangala is a form of the god Siva in his cruel aspect. Attributes: club and lotus. Three-eyed.

2. Goddess. A form of Parvati. She rides upon a lion and may bear up to ten arms, carrying arrow, mirror, moon disc, rosary, shield

and sword. Three-eyed.

Manidhara (*holding a gem*)

Minor god. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Sadaksari. Attributes: jewel and lotus.

Manjughosa (*sweet sounding*)

God. Buddhist. Form of the god Manjusri and an emanation of Aksobhya. Attended by a lion. Colour: white or gold. Attributes: arrow, bell, blue lotus, book, bow, image of Aksobhya, staff and sword.

Manjusri (*pleasing splendour*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. *Bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate, also god of wisdom. known period of worship circa 500 BC until present.

Synonyms large number of forms.

Centre(s) of cult pan-Asiatic.

Art references metal and stone sculptures, paintings. *Literary sources* Sadhanamala and Tantic ritual texts.

An important and popular deity throughout all sects of Buddhism. He is the son of either Amitabha or Aksobhya and is closely linked with the goddess Prajnaparamita who is seen as the personification of a holy text which Manjusri habitually carries, the *pustaka.* His attendant animal is the tiger or the lion. Colour: black, white, red or yellow. Attributes: chiefly book and sword, but also arrow, blue lotus and bow. May be three-headed.

Manmatha

Form of the god of carnal love. Dravidian (Tamil). A local southern Indian form of Kama with similar attributes and genealogy, named in Sangam literature.

Mantras and Mantra Yoga

Mantra Yoga originated from the Vedas and Tantras. This yoga brings about changes in material consciousness by the agency of sound. Of course, the '*sound*' Mantra Yoga is referring to is a

mysterious sound which you cannot hear by the human ear.

From modern science, we know three important facts. 1. Matter is an expression of energy. 2. This energy vibrates at different frequencies in different types of matter. 3. Our sense-organs can only recive sensations made in a very limited frequency-range. For example, we can hear only the sound produced in a limited-frequency range and anything above this range is called *Ultra Sound* and the sound below it is called *Infra Sound.* Of course, by no means can one conclude that the sound in Mantra Yoga belongs to one of the categories above. We could say that Mantra Yoga is based on the vibratory aspect of energy and its modifications into varied matter. Mantras are used to bring about substantial results as well as the unification and unfolding of consciousness. Mantra Yoga as such is not a special yoga, instead it is widely used by devotees belonging to all other yogas for spiritual upliftment and unfolding of consciousness.

Mantra combines two root words Man—To think —and Tra Instrumentality. In brief, Mantra is *thought-form.* Mantra is a magic formula of incantation or spell. Most of the important Mantras came from Tantras. In Hinduism, deities are represented by Mantras and each deity is associated with a particular Mantra. It is said that the power of the Mantra brings down the deity to enter an image and then the image comes 'alive'. All Mantras are made of letters of the Sanskrit alphabet. It is believed that each letter has the potency of infinite power and when several of these letters are properly grouped into a Mantral, then that Mantra contributes to create a special effect. According to the power of the Mantras, they are grouped into Male, Female and Neutral types. The Mantras that end in 'Hum' or 'Phat' are called masculine Mantras, those that end in 'Svaha' are called feminine Mantras and Mantras that end in 'Namah' are called neutral Mantras. There are 52 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet, so there are 52 letters in the Sanskrit alphabet, so there are 52 elements of powers which are available for producing Mantras in many different combinations. Of course nobody can say that sounds produced by the Sanskrit alphabet alone can become a Mantra. The only point to state here is that Hindu Mantras are made by the ancient scientists of the Vedic age called Rishis and an

indepth evaluation had taken place before accepting any word combinations as Mantra. There is an endless number of Mantras in Hinduism.

To begin with, a Mantra should be given to a devotee by a Guru, if the fullest benefit is to be derived from it. Of course, one can pick up any Mantra and start chanting it, and as long as the person has faith in that Mantra he will receive some positive results. Japa is the best known technique in Mantra Yoga, in which Mantra is repeated constantly, first audibly by the human voice and then silently and mentally. As a devotee continues chanting his favourite Mantra, he will notice changes in his consciousness. But it is not necessary to see any changes in his physical body. There are several types of Mantras, among which Pranava and Gayatri are most popular. Just as a seed grows into a particular kind of tree according to the type of seed, so too is the effect of each Mantra. The Mantra, which Hare Krishna devotees chant is:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare; Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama, Rama, Hare Hare: This Mantra is specifically used to free one from karma or bondage according to the Srimad Maha Bhagavata written by Sage Vyasa.

Another popular Mantra is :

Sree Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram.

There are very many Mantras in Hinduism. There are even Mantras like *Vasikarani Mantra* to attract the opposite sex.

Manu

Primordial creator god. Hindu (Vedic). The son (s) of Surya. The name given to the fourteen original progenitors of mankind during the mythical or heroic ages. According to tradition, the consort of Manu is Ida, who was engendered from milk and butter offered to Siva as a propitiation.

Mara (*the destroyer*)

1. God. Buddhist. An evil deity who puts obstacles in the way of the Buddha. The equal of the Hindu god Kama. In Buddhist tradition, the Hindu gods Indra, Brahma, Visnu and Siva are *maras*

who become vanquished by various Buddhist deities. Attributes; fish standard.

2. God. Hindu. An epithet of Kama (deva).

Mari (killing)

1. Deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group od *dharanis*. Colour: reddish white. Attributes; needle, thread and staff. 2. Mother goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. See Mari Mai.

Mari Mai (*mother death*)

Plague goddess. Hindu. The sister of sitala, associated with cholera. Her Tamil counterpart is Mariyamman.

Marici (*shining*)

1. Astral goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Vairocana and also his female aspect of *Sakti*. She is further identified as a *buddha*-designate or *bodhisattva*. She may also be the mother of Sakyamuni (a form of the Buddha). Considered by some to be the equal of the Hindu Surya. She may be depicted is a three-headed form (as the *Sakti* of Hayagriva), in which case her left head dis that of a pig. She rides in a chariot drawn by seven boars. Colour; red, yellow or white. Attributes; arrow, bow, fly whisk, horse's head image in the hair, needle, prayer wheel, staff, sword, thread and trident. Three-eyed.

2. Demiurge. Hindu. A product of the creator god Brahma.

Mariyamman (*mother of smallpox*)

Plague goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. A terrible goddess, one of the *navasaktis* and linked with the goddess Kali. She is honoured in a ritual during which victms (in penance) are suspended from a rope and an iron hook through the flesh of the back and whirled around a pole Also Maryattal.

Marutgana

Storm gods. Hindu (Vedic). The sons of Rudra and attendants of Indra. Also Maruts.

Mata (*great mother*)

Primeval mother goddess. Hindu. The archetypal progenitrix of all living things. She becomes the tutelary goddess of every village in northern India, but is also seen as a plague goddess associated with smallpox, in which case her epithet becomes Maha Mai. Her Tamil counterpart is Amman.

Matara

Mother goddess. Hindu. Applied collectively to groups of deities, the divine mothers, also more specifically to the consort of the god Kasyapa. As divine mothers they are also regarded as *Saktis*. The numbers vary according to separate traditions and they are therefore identified as the *saptamataras* (seven), *astamataras* (eight) and *navasaktis* (nine). Less commonly there may be up to fifty *mataras* in a group. Their images are normally carved in stone (very few exist in metal) and they are depicted seated, often upon a corpse, and may be of terrifying appearance.

Matarisvan

Minor messenger god, Hindu (Vedic). The attendant of Agni.

Matsya

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). In this first *avatara* Vishnu appears as a fish which, according to one legend, tows a a ship carrying the law-giver Manu to safety after the primal flood. Matsya engages in an epic battle with the demon Hayagriva who stole and *Vedas* from a sleeping Brahma. Usually depicted with a human torse carrying symbols, e.g. wheel and conch, on a fish's body.

Maya (*devi*)

Mother goddess. Buddhist. The mother of the Buddha perceived as the world lotus or *padma* from which the Buddha was born. She equates with the Hindu goddess Laksmi. The term is also applied to the personification of the visible universe and, in Hinduism, as an epithet of the goddess Durga.

Mayajalakrama-Kurukulla (*one who proceeds in the net of illusion*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). The personifiction of all *dhyanibuddhas.* Colour: red. Attributes: arrow, bow, hook, images of the five *dhyanibuddhas,* lotus (rred), pitcher, rosary and water-jar.

Mayon (*the black one*)

Creator god. Early Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India and Sri Lanka]. Animistic high god of the pastoral regions, found in sangam literature and thought to reside in trees. Perhaps equating with Visnu of Krsna.

Medha (*wisdom*)

Minor goddess. Buddist (Mahayana). The Sakti of Sridhara.

Meditation

There are thousands of books on meditation and thousands of definitions on the state or result of meditation. Hinduism itself talks about 20 different levels of consciousness or mental stages. *So to put it very mildly, meditation is the art of making the mind still.* To explain it in layman's terms, *By meditation one enters a state of mind where there are no thoughts.*

Mind also has thousands of definitions and if you read them all you will be more confused than ever before. The easiest definition will be : Mind is a space in which planets or thoughts repose. So if we say mind has become still, it means mind has entered a thought-less state.

To begin with, people confuse themselves with all kinds of definitions on meditation and attach unnecessary spiritual dogmas to it. Some even give undue importance to the whole idea of meditation with a very snobbish outlook. People come and proudly say, "I was meditating for the last four hours" and so on. So what? Did you ever hear anyone come and say that he/she was sleeping for the last light hours, hence the whole world should salute them. All those things, as I said above, are hindrances to proper meditation.

So the first thing is to understand that meditation is as natural as sleep (Sushupti) and it is a vital exercise required of all human

beings from cradle to grave.

The art of meditation itself is grossly misunderstood by many people. *Many yogis make controlling the mind as a prerequisite for meditation instead of saying a controlled mind is the result or fruit of meditation.* Trying to wilfully control the mind is like attempting to control the activities of a monkey runing around the forest. Nobody can fight the mind and win. Mind is a very powerful force. The only thing anyone can do is to tame it by proper methods. Even Krishna acknowledges the power of the mind and tells a bewildered Arjuna: "Doubtless, Oh! *great warriorthe mind is difficult to subdue. It is restless all the time but oh! son of Kunti mind can be conquered by repeated exercises and dispassion to sensual objects.* (Bhagavad Gita, Chapa. 6:34).

There are so many ways of meditation; some of them direct and some are indirect. *One direct way is to watch the mind.* That is to watch the thoughts that come to the mind without in any way controlling or trying to participate in those thoughts. This method may sound difficult but when you start practising it, many of the questions you now have will vanish altogether. *Pranayama and Mantra Japa are indirect ways of watching the mind.*

"Do's and dont's" you have mentioned are known as *Yama-Niyamas.* I have no intention to belittle their importance. I feel people generally deal with religion with an intention of changing everthing overnight. In fact, they do act exactly like trying to make a perfect vacuum. *But there is no such thing as a perfect vacuum.* But at the same time it is easy to replace one form of gas with another gas in an airtight chamber. That is the idea on which am basing my theory. We should first earnestly start meditation exercises and be less harsh of ourselves with Do's and Dont's. That does not mean we should tolerate uncontrolled emotions. For example, if you are watching TV for 6 to 7 hours daily, then try to reduce it to 1 to 2 hours and watch it constructively. If you have the habit of eathing every now and then, try to change it to three times daily and so on. Changes should be made without giving the mind a chance to fight back with force. Remember Lord Krishna said: "Yoga is not for those who do not

eat at all nor for those who eat like a glutton. Yoga is not for those who do not sleep and those who sleep night and day." We are not living in the Himalayas but in cities where thousands of sensual objects pop up every now and then to stimulate our senses. *Moderation is the name of the game.*

Science is still to explore this topic. The only thing we know so far is that during meditation the body gets relaxed and there is a change in the brain electrical wavas. The parapsychological departments throughout the world are conducting a lot of experiments on the results of mediation, but so far nobody has come up with anything except stating that during meditation the brain makes alpha waves and sometimes even theta and delta waves.

Baby Pranagama is the easiest and safest method of all. It has been found that those animals which take long durations of breaths (the time for one cycle of inhalation and exhalation) live long lives, whereas those which take short durations of breaths live short lives. It is also interesting to note that a person's health and character are very much a reflection of his breaths-pattern. Generally people who take short breaths are weak, nervous and very undependable, whereas those who take longer and deeper breaths are usually trustworthy, happy people. When a person gets agitated, his breath-pattern changes rapidly, taking shorter and shorter breaths. When a person develops sublime thoughts in him, he takes longer and longer breaths. Thousands of years ago the Rishis, the great scientists of Hinduism found out that there are vital currents in the body called 'Prana'. They also found that there is a close relationship between Breath and Prana, Prana and Thought and Thought and Mind. In brief Prana is interconnected with the whole body mechanism and they found out the system of exercises called *Pranayama.*

As I told you before, *Pranayama* is the most scientitic method of controlling cital currents in the body. Pranayama has to be practised only under the guidance of a very capable Guru and it is associated with a lot of Do's and Don'ts or Yama Nyamas. Hamsa literally means swan—the beautiful white bird that swims in silent

lakes. In Hinduism, the swan also symbolises purity and tranquillity. In this method one indirectly chants the Mantra sah-Aham meaning 'He is I'. It is also worth noticing that when a man inhales he makes a noish *Ham* or *Aham*. When a man exhales he makes a noise *Sa* or *Sah*. Now coming back to the main point, the *Hamsa* method is the method of watching the incoming and outgoing breaths (inhalation and exhalation) without interfering with the rhythm of breathing.

The method is very simple. You may sit or stand or lie down in whatever position you like to do this. You can do it at any time of the day or night you want. You can do this at any place you want. You can do it for as much time as you like.

Prior to following this method, if it helps you, you may do deep-breathing exercises to bring in "rhythimic breathing" in your system for five or ten minutes.

Now let me elaborate the actual *Hamsa* method: Just watch inhalation and exhalation without interfering with the process of breathing, without even trying to control chest or nostril movements. Do not even try to change the rhythm of breathing. Just say to yourself: "I am just going to watch my breathing —I am going to enjoy myself watching my breath." That is all.

The first result will be that you will fall asleep during this exercise. According to Hinduism, sleep is a hindrance to meditation. But I feel people should be happy if they fall asleep during this exercise since many have to take high doses of sleeping pills to fall asleep. Once you have transcended sleep, in the next stage you will start going into mental conditions without any thought at all. In this mental state, you will also find your breath-pattern slow down considerably. In this state of mind, you will start enjoying peace and happiness to which you were accustomed before. Of course first you will have this enjoyable mental state for a few minutes only. As time goes on this mental state will last for several minutes and finally for hours.

This exercise will immediately reduce stress conditions in you. The stress is the mental condition one will have as a result of

involuntary thinking. This method will also help you to face difficult situations in life. One thing worth mentioning about this exercise is that it has no negative effects at all.

The scientific explanation of this method is very simple. In stress and high emotional stages, your breath-pattern is very erratic and you exhibit a tendency to take shorter and shorter breaths. But when you practise this exercise you will be able to develop rhythimic breathing like an alternating sinusolidal wave. Since there is a very close connection between breath, brain waves, thought and mind, we are indirectly controlling thought, brain waves and mind by directly watching the involuntary breaths. It you look deeper into this method, you wil! also see that due to the practice of this method your breath is slowing down since we are trying to make involuntary breathing a voluntary action in the body. During the practice of this method, your brain-waves will change into alpha wves initially. This method is very simple and believe it or not we are all doing this atleast once every day. Surprisingly, breath is the last thing we are aware of when we go to sleep every day. To repeat, this exercise has no negative effect at all and even though you may or may not fully agree with some of my scientific interpretations, I think you should try this method of mediation.

Meghanada (*cloud roar*)

Minor god. Hindu. A son of Ravana who once briefly bested Indra and became known as the 'Indra-conqueror'.

Mena

Mountain goddess. Hindu. The consort of Himavan and the mother of Ganga and Parvati.

Mhalsa

Minor goddess. Hindu (late). The consort of Khandoba and considered to be a form of the goddess Parvati. Locally worshipped at Jejuri, near Poona in western India.

Mi-Lo Fo

God. Chinese Buddhist. The local name given to the *bodhisattva*

Maitreya. Like the Indian model he is represented as a rubicund figure. Attributes include roses and a purse.

Mitra (*friend*)

Minor sun god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). An *aditya*, one of six descendants of Aditi, he was originally associated with Varuna (Vedic), ruling the day while Varuna ruled the night. It is form this model that first Mithra (Persian) and then Mithras (Roman) were derived. He is also the god of intimate friendhip. Attributes: two lotus trident and a sacrificial drink or soma.

Mohini (*illusion*)

Minor incarnation of Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Mohini is an *avatara* who appears in the form of an enchantress whose form Visnu adopted briefly to deceive demons attempting to remove the ambrosia created by churning the primeval ocean of milk (see also Garuda) Visnu used the same guise to dupe and seduce the god Siva.

Morva

Sky spirits. Andaman Island [Sea of Bengal]. Invisible but thought to be of human form.

Mrgasiras (*head of a gazelle*)

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent naksatra; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

dMu-bDud Kam-Po Sa-Zan

Sky god. Bon [Tibet]. The head of the ancient pantheon in the Bon religion.

Mucalinda

Tutelary god. Buddhist. The guardian of a lake near Bodh Gaya. He is identifed as a king of the *nagas* or snake gods and is said to have protected the Buddha from a storm by coiling around him.

Mula

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A malevolent

nokatra; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Munisvara

Deified saint. Hindu, Technically a demi-go but worshipped as a deity by Dravidians in southern India. Also Municami (Tamil).

Muraja

Goddess of music. Buddhist. Deifiecation of a kind of large drum of tambourine. Colour: smoky. Attribute: tambourine.

Marukan

Hunting and war god. Dravidian and Tamil [southem India]. Identified with the Hindu god Skanda. His vehicle is an elephant or a peacock. Colour: red. Attributes : spear and staff with garland.

Mythology

The mythology, as the word's meaning goes, is the "logic of myth". So, there could be instances where certain things contradict themselves in mythology. When someone looks at Hinduism, he should look at the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads and Raja Yoga, and then ask questions regarding them. Anyway, I shall try to explain to you mythological concepts as clearly as I can.

To begin with, Lord Krishna is God in the flesh, not an ordinary human being. Secondly, Sage Narada himself felf that Krishna was a polygamist. One day, he went to the 16,008 houses, and Narada saw Krishna performing hosehold duties in every house. From that observation he came to the conclusion that Krishna is a monogamist, and the supreme being.

There is also another explanation about Krishna and his wives, most of whom are Gopis. "*Love of Gopis for Krishna*" is a *symbolism of "the craving of Jivatman-individual soul-to merge with Paramatman* (*Absolute soul*)." Here Gopis represent Jivatman (individual soul) and Krishna represents (Paramatman). To an ordinary man who reads songs of Swami Jayadeva, it will sound an exaggeration, but actually they are the symbolisom of the Jivatam-Paramatma union.

"Ahimas Paramo Dharmah"-Non-violence is the highest viritue-is

written for the ordinary man. Of course, Mahatma Gandhi used it effectively as a weapon against the British in India. But gods act on a different plane altogether. Their actions are not motivated by anger, greed or selfishness. *They act in a very mathematical and logical manner.* Just look at the way Lord Rama killed demon Ravana. Rama did that without any kind of anger. He could have transformed Ravana, but no the part of Ravana he was looking forward to death at the hands of Rama, so that he could achieve salvation. To give you another example, let us say, you put your hand in fire. You get burnt. You cry with pain. But the fire did not have any particular desire to hurt you. It is its nature to burn. Gods act in the same way. Whey they kill a demon, they do that without anger. They could convert the demon, but still they prefer to kill, because the demon's actions warrant pain for his body in this world. Here we go back to Law of Karma, again. Remember the crucifixion of Christ. A person who can distribute seven loaves of bread to thousands could have easily converted all his enemies. Still Christ chose to suffer the agony on the cross. Why? To obey the Law of Karma which requires Pleasure and Pain for the body.

It is very difficult to answer questions on mythology using logic and reason. For example, how on earth can anybody explain Lord Ganapati (elephant-headed God) using a tiny mouse as his vehicle? How can anybody explain the 10 heads of Ravana and one thousand heads of the serpent Ananta? Science cannot still tackle the problems of the Siamese twins, let alone 10 or 1000 heads on one body. It is indeed funny to hear people criticise Lord Rama for giving up his beloved consort princess Sita. They know that by no means are they going to get any satisfactory answer on that question but still this type of criticism of mythology lingers on. Mythological stories may have been written with very high ideological meanings but unluckily with our very limited knowledge, we cannot understand them.

With the aid of modern science we may be able to understand things like Brahmastra (as nuclear) missiles), Krishna's Sudarshana Chakra (as a kind of strategic defence initiative weapon with great offensive capabilities SDI,) the story of the birth of Lord Hanuman, where Goddess Parvati transferred her pregnancy to the wife of the

God of Air (surrogate motherhood), four sons of Queen Kunti Devi (as test-tube babies), 100 sons of Queen Gandhari (she did not use a test-tube, she used big earthenware pot) and Pushpaka Vimana (a helicopter) and so on. Of course, all these are speculations and as such we are all better off using mytholgy to strictly understand the unwitten laws of the universe. Arguing on mythological stories is the erroneous act of all and as such all arguments should be avoided.

N

Nagakumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of *bhvanavasi* (dwelling in places). They have a youthful appearance and are associated with rain and thunder.

Nagaraja

Snake god. Hindu. The generic tile of a deity equating with the terms *mahoraga* (great serpent) or *nagadeva.* Such deities were worshipped in India as early as the Indus Valley civilization (prior to 1700 BC).

Nagini

Goddess. Jain [India]. The counterpart of the Hindu goddess Manasa.

Naigameya

God. Hindu, Either the son son or the brother of the god Skanda. Generally depicted with the head of a goat.

Nairamata (*no soul*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya. A *Sakit* of Heruka and a personification of knowledge. She bears five or six arms in different gestures and often stands upon a corpse. Colour: blue or black. Attributes: arrows, club, cup and knife. Three-eyed.

Naksatra (s)

Generic tile for a group of astral goddesses. Hindu. Stars or

constellations which became personified as deities, which became personified as deities, accounted as twenty-seven daughters of Daksa and consorts of Candra or Soma. They can exert benign or evil influence.

Namasangiti (*the chanting of the name*)

God. Buddhist. A form of Avalokitesvara, but also a distinct emanation of Vairocana. The personification of a sacred text. He stands upon a lotus. Colour: white. Attributes: club, lotus, sword, half-staff and water-jar.

Nandi(n) (*rejoicing*)

Bull god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Generally associated with Siva as a bull-vehicle and an embodiment of fertility. Colour: white. The image usually stands in an anteroom of the temple guarding the place where the statue of Siva is located. A Siva devotee touches the image's testicles on entry to a shrine. In anthropomorphic form he may be known as Nandisa.

Nang Lha

House god. Tibetan. A personal family guardian depicted with the head of a pig. He is propitated with libations.

Nan-Sgrub (*the black one*)

God. Buddhist [Tibet]. Possibly a counterpart of the Hindu god Kala. In Lamaism he is a form of Yama. He stands upon a man. Colour: dark blue. Attributes cup and knife.

Nappinnai

Local goddess. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). Consort of Krsna. Mentioned in the Vaisnavite and Saivite literature, the Krsna-Nappinnai cult was prominent in Tamil-Speaking areas of southern India in the seventh to ninth centuries. According to tradition Krsna wed Nappinnai after a bull-baiting contest during which he took on the defeated seven bulls. Nappinnai may be a localized form of Sri-Laksmi. Also Pinnai.

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bull-baiting contest during which he took on and defeated seven bulls. Nappinnai may be a localized form of Sri-Laksmi. Also Pinnai.

Nara (*man*)

Minor incanations (s) of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Some authorities place these as separate *avataras,* but they are usually linked. Two of the sons of Dharma, who was born from the heart of Brahma, they spent a thousand years as severe ascetics in the Himalaya, where they were subject to various temptations by Indra. They are described as sages. The texts depict Nara coloured green and bearing two hands, whilst Narayana has four hands, whilst Narayana has four hands and is coloured blue. They may also be paralleled by Hari and Krsna. Also Narayana.

Narad (*giver of advice*)

Minor but popular deity. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). Narada is depicted as a sage who is also a messenger and teacher. Born from the head, or throat, of Brahma, and aternatively a minor incarnation of Visnu. In various roles he is a guardian deity of women, a musician and a wanderer. Narada, often bearded, is generally depicted standing with the musical instrument which is his invention, the *vina* (lute). By contrast to his being nature he is also described as a 'maker of strife' and as 'vile'. Also Kali-Karaka; Pisuna.

Narad, an easily recognizable figure with a lute in one hand and a pointed and knotted tuft of hair in the centre of the otherwise clean-shaven scalp, plays a subsidiary but very important role in numerous mythological stories and religious scriptures of the Hindus.

According tc Mahabharat Narad was the son of Kashyap and his mother was one of the daughters of Daksha. Another account says that he sprang from the forehead of Brahma. According to some Purans he frustrated the scheme of his father-in-law, Daksha, to people the earth with his five thousand sons. He advised the sons to choose the path of asceticism and not lead a worldly life. Daksha wanted his children to help in the work of creation and he became

very angry. Daksha was going to curse Narad but was pacified by Bhahma.

Narad figures in Mahabharat and Krishna stories as the seer who foretold the death of king Kans at the hands of Krishna. In religious books and other legends there come numerous references to Narad, though these denote a time lag of centuries. Shankaracharya, the great Hindu philosopher of the eighth century A.D. explains this anomaly by stating that such perfected beings and gods, though freed from the bonds of ignorance and illusion, continue their appearances again and again for completion of their divine missions, assigned to them from age to age.

Narad is also named as Kapivaktra or monkey-faced. This episode makes an interesting study of how God curbs the *Ahamkar* (pride) of even the best of seers. It mentions that once Narad's meditation could not be disturbed even by Kama Dev the god of lust). At this victory Narad was overwhelmed by a feeling of pride unbecoming of a seer. Vishnu decided to teach him a lesson by humbling his pride. Hecreated an illusory kingdom and a most beautiful princess. In fact princess was the incarnation of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. When Narad reached the territory of this king, he was told that the beautiful princess is to marry the prince of her choice shortly and preparations were on for that marriage ceremony. Narad saw that beautiful princess and immediately fell in love with her. He approached Shiv to seek his advice how to attain the hand of that maiden. Lord Shiv led him to Vishnu saying that he should borrow the face of Vishnu, after which the princess could never resist the beauty of that face and would put the garland of marriage around the neck of Narad.

Narad went to Vishnu and requested that he be given a face as beautiful as that of Vishnu so as to attract the princess. Vishnu played a trick and gave the face of a monkey to Narad. Not knowing what had happened, Narad reached the court of that King. So many other princes had also assembled there to solicit the hand of princess. The princess entered the hall of marriage with a flower garland in hand. Narad was sure that with the handsome face that he had got, the princess would choose him as the companion of

life. But to his utter dismay and great astonishment, the princess did not even look twice at his face of a monkey. Suddenly Lord Vishnu also appeared in the court and the princess put the garland around his neck.

Narad then had a look at his monkey-face in a pool of water and became mad with rage. He cursed Vishnu proclaiming that Vishnu would, during his sojourn on earth, have to bear the pangs of his wife's forcible separation from him and only a monkey would be able to relieve him of his sufferings. Thus Vishnu was born as Ram and had to take the help of Hanuman to free Sita from the clutches of Ravan.

In Devi Bhagwat Puran a story comes where Narad desires to know from Vishnu the secret and nature of *Maya* (the illusion). Vishnu led Narad to a lake and asked him to take a bath. Narad found himself transformed into a female and though such a great seer he forgot who he really was. He as a female started taking his life as such and married a King called Taladhavaj. He also gave birth to sons and took pride in his family. Suddenly Vishnu dispelled this illusion and brought back Narad to the realm of reality. Narad thereby learnt what power Maya has over man.

Narad is shown as a wandering seer going from one place to another. This is the result of a curse, whereby he was condemned to lead a roaming life not staying at one place. He is reputed to have invented Vina, the principal stringed instrument of India and is deemed to be the leader of the celestial musicians. He is famous as a mischief-maker and in India his name is taken as a symbol of a person who is always creating one or the other type of light mischief for gods and goddesses.

The authorship of several hymns of Rig Veda is ascribed to him and he is the author of Naradiya Dharam Shastra, a great work on law and moral conduct.

Naradatta (*daughter of Nara*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Narasinha (*man-lion*)

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The fourth avatara of the god is depicted as a man-lion hybrid. According to legend, the demonic king Hiranyakasipu had taken on a dangerous invulnerability. To thwart this, Visnu took the form of Narasinha and hid inside of pillar of the king's palace whence he sprang, capturing Hiranyakasipu and tearing out his entrails. Iconographically, the scene is portrayed with the victim thrown across Narasinha's lap and the god's claws plunged into his body. Narasinha may also appear seated in a yoga position with the goddess Laksmi on his knee.

Narsingh

Narsingh, the fourth incarnation of god Vishnu, is halflion half-human and provides a very fascinating study of Lord's incarnation in order to alleviate the sufferings of devotees. The story runs thus.

Among descendants of Daksh, the first man that Brahma created, there was one Kashyap, a sage, who had four wives, Diti, Aditi, Vinita and Kudoroo. Diti gave birth to demons and from Aditi were born gods, while from Vinita was born Gurud, the carrier of Vishnu and the last one Kudroo created the hydras.

Out of the demons born of Diti, two were with terrific powers. These two brothers were named Hiranyaksh and Hiranyakashyapu. Bout of them performed so many religious practices and austerities that in course of time they gained limitless powers. Brahma was so pleased with their penances that he bestowed on Hiranyakashyapu the priceless boon of immortality with these words: no common human being or god could destroy him, that he would not die either in the day or in the night, netither in earth nor in heaven, and he would not be killed by any weapon, or by water or fire.

After this blessing the two demons crossed all bounds in oppression and even dethroned Indra, the king of heavens. Indra in the company of all the gods appeared before Brahma and prayed for deliverance. Brahma was very much worried and replied that the two demons had become powerful due to the blessings bestowed by him on Hiranyakashyapu and how could he destory them! He

also advised Indra to go to Vishnu, which they did. To Vishnu these gods retold their story of sufferings and said that due to boons given by Brahma the two demons had been indulging in all sorts of oppression. Vishnu promised to destroy them in due course of time.

Hiranyakashyapu had a son named Prahlad. This boy right from his very childhood was attracted towards Vishnu and other gods. Prahlad had not obeyed the orders of his father not to worship Vishnu. His father tried to destroy his son in fits of anger; tying a stone to Prahlad's body he was thrown in the river but Vishus himself came and stopped him from drowning and dying. Hiranyakashyapu later tried to get Prahlad trampled under the feet of an elephant but the elephant lifted Prahlad lovingly by the help of his trunk and put him on its back. He then built a house and putting Prahlad into its set the same to fire; even this could not harm Prahlad. The father even tried to poison the son but to no avail.

At last one day he shouted and asked Prahlad, "You repeat Vishnu's name day in and day out; where does this god live?" Prahlad mildly replied that He was present everywhere. The father asked, 'Is that Vishnu present in this pillar also?' Parahlad replied, "Yes, very much". Hiranyakashyapu shouted, "See, I will kill him then". He gave the pillar a heavy blow with his mace and a surprise resulted. The brickpillar burst open and Vishnu, in the form of a being half-man and half-lion came out of it. This was the reincarnations as Narsingh.

The shape of this god incarnate was neither of a man nor of a god nor of an animal. This god was not born of the womb in ordinary course. The time of appearance was also evening, when it was neither day nor night. The demon was bodily lifted and placed by Narsingh on his knees, which was between the earth and the sky. The god tore the demon's body with his claws—thus using no weapon of any kind This way the blessings of Brahma were not overruled. After killing Hiranyakashyapu Narsingh also killed his other demon brother.

Prahlad was in tears and asked Narsingh about the fate of his father in the after-life. Vishnu assured the devotee that as He, the Lord

himself had killed the father, the latter would surely go the heaven. Vishnu also gave a blessing to Prahlad that now onwards none of his race would die by the hands of Vishnu.

Narayana

Creator god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). More or less synonymous with Visnu, but specifically describing the embodiment of the abode of man'. He is said to have sucked his toe whilst sailing the primeval ocean on a banana leaf, until his own inspiration created the world. Often depicted supported by the bird god Garud. See also Nara.

Nataraja (*lord of the dance*)

Form of the god Siva. Hindu (Puranic). Emerging from 1200 AD onwards, this form depicts Siva as 'Iord of the dance' ringed by fire and with one foot on a demon in the form of a black dwarf. Nataraja arugably epitomizes the moving power in the cosmos. Largely seen in southern Indian bronzes which display the dance-form *anandatandava.*

Natha

Tutelary god. Buddhist [Sri Lanka]. One of four local emanations of the *bodhisattva* Avalokitesvara.

Navadurga (s)

Generic title of a group of deities. Hindu, The nine nine forms of the god Durga. The common vehicle is a chariot shaped like a lotus. Each carries a wide assortment of attributes.

Navasakti =(s)

Generic title of a group of goddesses. Hindu. The nine mataras or mothers. In southern India they are considered virgin goddesses and are held in higher esteem that the comparable group of *saptamataras.*

Nediyon

Creator god. Early Dravidian (Tamil) [southern .India]. Equates with a syncretization of Visnu and Krsna. The name implies a deity

of tall stature. Sangam texts describe him wearing a golden robe. Attributes: conch, prayer wheel and lotus. Also Neduvel.

Niladanda

Go. Buddhist. A *dikpala* or guardian deity of the south-western quarter. Colour; bule. Attributes: jewel, lotus, staff, sword and trident.

Niladevi (*black goddess*)

Consort of the god Visnu. Hindu (Puranic): Mentioned only in the *Vaikhanasagama* text as the third wife of Visnu, no art representation of this goddess has been discovered. She may be identical with the goddess Pinnai known in Tamil-speaking regions.

Nilalohita

God. Hindu. One of the *ekadasarudras* or eleven forms of the god Rudra.

Nirrti (*destruction*)

1. Destructive goddess of darkness. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). Known chiefly from the Rg-veda, Nirrti has a generally malignant aspect and is associated with pain, misfortune and death. She is believed to live in the south (the land of the dead). She is dark-skinned, wears dark dress and receives the 'dark husks' of sacrifice. She is feared by many Hindus, whose offerings are frequent and repeated. In later Hinduism, Nirrti changes sex and becomes a *dikpala* god of terrifying appearance, guarding the south-western quarter; he has various consorts including Davi, Kaika and Krsnangi. He stands upon a lion, a man or a corpse. Attributes: javelin, shield, staff, sword and teeth. 2. God. Buddhist. A *dikpala* or guardian. Colour: blue. Stands upon corpse. Attributes: shield and sword.

Nrtya (*dance*)

Mohther goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the astamataras. Colour: green or various. Attribute: staff.

O

O-Iwa-Dai-Myojin

God of stoneworkers. Shinto and Buddhist [Japan]. Probably more a Buddhist deity, but also revered in Shintoism.

Om

The most sacred syllable, the first sound of the Almighty—the sound from which emerges each and every other sound, whether of music or of language.

In the Upanishads this sacred syllable appears as a mystic sound, regarded by scriptures as the very basis of every other sacred *mantra* (hymn). It is the sound not only of origination but also of dissolution. The past present and future are all included in this one sound and even all that transcends this configuration of time is also implied on Om.

According to Taitreya Upanishad the origin of language is assigned to Prajapati, from whose meditation on the three words arose the three Vedas and from his meditation arose the three syllables, *bhōor, bhuva* and *suah,* which represent earth, atmosphere and sky. From his meditation on these three originated the divine syllable of OM, which coordinated all speech and represented the totality of the world. The syllable Om also represents the *trimurti* (triad) of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv.

Shiv's drum produced this sound and through it came the notes of the octave, i.e., Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni. Thus by this sound Shiv creates and recreates the universe. OM is also the sound form of Atman.

The Upanishads state that everything, existent and nonexistent, can be grasped by uttering the sacred syllable of OM. This psycho-therapic efficacy of OM is deemed limitless and its utterance redeems all errors in the performance of a sacrifice. Meditation on OM satisfies very need and ultimately leads to liberation. Nearly all the prayers and recitals of sacred passages are prefixed by the utterance of OM. Its equivalent is Omkar, venerated in the same manner and is thought to be the representation of God Himself.

Musically, it is also held that the term OM or AUM is made up by three base notes 'A' 'U' 'M' or the basic 'Sa' Pa' of the fundamental scale and again Sa (the base note) of the immediately higher scale. When one pronounces these notes in continuity, all the basic notes from Sa to Ni also sound. Similarly when one pronounces AUM correctly, all the basic sounds also echo. It is believed to be the traditional way of clearing all the impediments in the vocal chord to make one chant the hymns correctly. Their unison makes one not only sound sonorous but also acts as the necessary preparation to chant a Mantra (Incantation) correctly. It is for this reason that all the Vedic Mantras ha 'OM' or 'AUM' as the first term.

Ostaraki (*covering*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

P

Padma (*lotus*)

1. Snake god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of seven *mahanagas*. Attributes: rosary and water jar. Three-eyed. 2. Goddess. An incarnation of Laksmi, the consort of an *avatara* of Visnu. She is depicted as emanating from the *padma* or lotus (*Nelumbium speciosum*) which is the symbol of creation and one of the most important iconographic devices in Hinduism. Also Kamala.

Padmantaka (*destructive to the lotus*)

God. Buddhist. A *dikpala* or guardian of the western direction. Colour: red. Attributes: jewel, red lotus, prayer wheel and sword. Three-headed.

Padmapani (*with lotus in hand*)

God. Buddhist. A bodhisattva or buddha-designate, and a distinct form of Avalokitesvara. Colour: white or red. Attributes: book, image of Amitabha on the crown, knot of hair, lotus, rosary, trident and water-jar. Three-eyed.

Padmatara (*lotus Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana).

Padmosnisa

God. Buddhist. Apparently connected with the guardian deities or *dikpalas* and associated with the western direction. Colour: red.

Palaniyantavan

Local god. Hindu-dravidian (Tamil) Known only from southern India and considered to be a form of Skanda or of Murukan, who is an old Tamil tribal snake god.

Pancabrahma

Collective name for five aspects of Siva. Hindu. The five aspects are Aghora, Isana, Sadyojata, Tatpurusa and Vamadeva. Also Isanadayas.

Pancamukha-Patradeva

God. Buddhist. A 'bowl-god'. Attributes: an alms bowl in each of sixteen hands. Five-headed.

Pancanana

Demonic deity. Hindu (Puranic). Regarded as a form of the god Siva possessing five faces, each face having three eyes. Depicted with the naked body of an ascetic, wearing a necklace of snakes. Shrines symbolize the god with a stone, its top painted red and usually placed beneath a tree. Pancanana is worshipped extensively in Hindu villages throughout Bengal where women make invocations and anoint the stones, particularly when sickness strikes. There is a belief that children in the throes of epilepsy have been seized by the god.

Pancaraksa (*five-fold protection*)

Group of goddesses. Buddhist. Five tutelary or guardian deities who personify protective spells or magic formulae. They are thus known as 'spell goddesses'.

Panchatantra & arthashastra

Panchatantra (Five Books) is a collection of stories told by one wise man named Vishnusharman to a few princes to teach them about worldly affairs. Behind each story there is a moral, showing the exact course of action a wise man should undertake. It also teaches the science of statecraft and proper understanding of human nature.

In these storiest, human vices are exposed through the characters of animals. The leading part in the stories are played by two jackals, Karataka and Damanaka. It is said that this famous fable-book of ancient India was written during 200 B.C. One of the very good books on Panchatantra, is a translation by Arthur W. Ryder, University of Chicago Press. 1925. Another good translation was written by Mr. D. Ghosal namely Thirty-five stories from Panchatantra — Calcutta 1925.

Artha Shastra is the code of ethics for kings written by the saintly (!) prime minister of Mourya Dynasty, by name Kautilya or Chanakya. The literal word meaning of Kautilya is crookedness or Treachery. Arthashastra is dedicated to Venus and Jupiter, deals with Nyaya doctrine and Atharva Veda. Believe it or not, just like *Deadsea Scrolls* 1948 this scripture was discovered in 1905.

The book is divided into 15 books dealing with a large variety of political and social subjects. Apart from ruling the country properly, this book also teaches an efficient system of espionage. It also teaches different methods of torturing the enemy. It deals with all kinds of bodily tortures, like flogging to death, water-tube torture and all kind of mutilation of organs and limbs. This is indeed the most cynical doctrine known to mankind. It is indeed the most ferocious criminal code.

Do the laws of Hinduism change from time to time? It used to be like that. The great Rishis who guided Hinduism from one age to another made all changes as per the need of the time.

Hinduism allow the introduction of new laws. It allows not only the introduction of new laws but also the production of new scriptures. Right now Hindu society has grown very big and unfortunately, most Hindus only know the mythological stories and a few lines from the Bhagvad Gita.

Does that mean Hinduism is a dead religion? Not at all. Since we do not know most of the scriptures does not mean that we are ignorant of the ideals and codes of Hinduism. Most Hindus practise Hinduism in their day-to-day life. Their family, social and professional lives are reflections of their practice of Hinduism,

knowingly or unknowingly. Since we follow the Hindu Code of Ethics, we have less stress and strain in our lives. I know son, you are very eager to ask me specific questions but let us go through the history and development of Hinduism first.

Pandara

Goddess. Buddhist. The *Sakti* of *Amitabha* and a female *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. She originates from the Tantric syllable PAM. Colour: rose. Attributes: blue lotus, cup, knife and prayer wheel.

Pansahi Mata

Mother goddess. Hindu. A *Sakti* and one of seven *saptamataras* (mothers) who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent, inflicting sickness on children under the age of seven. Particularly known from Bengal.

Paramasva (*great horse*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). Considered to be a form of Hayagriva depicted with four legs and trampling the four major Hindu deities underfoot. Colour: red. Attributes: arrow, bow, head of a horse, great lotus, lotus, staff and sword. Three-eyed.

Paramita

Descriptive name of a philosophical deity. Buddhist. Applied to one of the group of twelve whose spiritual father is Ratnasambhava. Common attributes: banner with a pearl, and a lotus.

Parasurama (*Rama-with-the-axe*)

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The sixth *avatara* of Visnu (see also Rama) in which form he saved the world from an army of tyrannical warriors. According to legend, Rama, the son of a wise man, became a skilled bowman and in gratitude he went to the Himalaya where he stayed, devoting himself to Siva. His consort is Dharani. Though without his bow, Rama acted as a champion of the gods in a war against the demons and was rewarded with an are. In another legend, Visnu took the

form of Parasurama to rid the world of despotic rulers. This *avatara* appears in human form, with two arms and with an axe in the right hand. Other attributes: arrow, bow, knife, skin and sword. Also Parasuramavatara.

Parendi

Minor goddess of prosperity. Hindu (Vedic). Associated with the acquisition of wealth.

Pariskaravasita (*control of purification*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of *vasitas* personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: yellow. Attribute: jewelled staff.

Parjanya (*rain giver*)

God of rain. Hindu (Vedic). Became replaced by, or syncretized with, Indra in later Hinduism, but in the Vedas he is seen as a god of gentle, fructifying rain. May be regarded as an *aditya.*

Parna-Savari (*dressed in leaves*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya and *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Also one of a group of *dharanis* (deifications of literature). She is particularly recognized in the north-west of India. Her vehicle is Ganesha surmounting obstacles. Colour: yellow or green. Attributes: arrow, axe, how, flower, noose, peacock feather, skin and staff. Three eyed and three-headed.

Parvati (*daughter of the mountain*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) (India). Mother goddess.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD until present times. *Synonyms* Sakti; Ahladini-Sadini; Sati; Uma. Many epithets including Amba (mother); Aja (she goat); Gauri (corn goddess aspect); Bhutamata (mother of goblins).

Centred (s) of cult none specific. *Art references* sculptures, chiefly in bronze but also in stone: reliefs. *Literary sources Ramayana* epic and various Puranic texts.

Parvati may have originated from the mountain tribes in the Himalaya. As a goddess of fertility she is the youngest of the benign aspects of the goddess Sakti. She also appears as a reincarnation of Sati. She is the daughter of Himavan (the Himalaya) and Mena, a sister of Visnu and the younger sister of Ganga. She becomes the consort of the god Siva and, as such, personifies the extreme example of the devoted and steadfast Hindu wife. Her sons inclue Ganesha and Skanda.

She is presented to Siva, the ascetic, as a beautiful dancing girl. On becoming aware of his lack of interest, she pursues a life of self-dential until he finally appears to her as an old Brahman and takes her as his consort.

Parvati is depicted with two arms when accompanying Siva, but four when standing alone; she may be elephant headed or carrying Ganesa as a baby, and appears in many varieties. Attributes: conch, crown, mirror, ormamented head-band, rosary and occasionally a lotus.

Pasupati *(lord of animals)*

God of animals. Hindu [India]. His consort is Svaha and his son is Sanmukha. Thought to have been derived from an earlier pre- Indo aryan deity worshipped by the Indus Valley civilization as a horned god with three faces, sitting surrounded by animals. In Hindu culture regarded as an aspect of Siva and depicted standing upon a corpse.

Patadharini (*bearing a cloth*)

Goddess of passage. Buddhist. She watches over curtains and doorways. Colour: blue. Attribute: a curtain.

Pattinidevi (*queen of goddesses*)

Mother goddess. Hindu (Singhalese) [Sri Lanka], A deification of Kannaki, the consort of Kovolan who, according to ancient Tamil tradition, joumeyed to the town of Madurar to sell a gold anklet. Through trickery she was convicted of theft and executed, but was canonized. According to another tradition, she was born from a mango pierced by a sacred arrow. In southern India and Sri Lanka a

goddess of chastity and fidelity in marriage. Also a guardian against diseases, including measles and smallpox. She is associated with fire-walking rituals. Attributes: cobra-hood behind the head, and a lotus.

Pavana (*purifier*)

God of the winds. Hindu. His consort is Anjana. Also Vayu.

Phyi-Sgrub (*the external one*)

God. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet)]. A form of the god Yama who rides a buffalo or a bull. Colour: blue, yellow or white. Attributes: noose, prayer wheel and staff surmounted by a skeleton.

Pitari (*snoke-catcher)*

One of the consorts of Siva. Hindu (Puranic and later). A benevolent *navasakti.* The cult of Pidari probably evolved in the sixth and seventh centuries AD and is generally restricted to southern India. She is considered an aspect of the goddess Kali and is invoked in many villages to ward off evil and demons. She has most of the attributes of Kali and may also have snakes around her breasts, but may also be represented by stone. Her cut moved at one time and reached a clmax in eastern India between the eighth and twelfth centures. Attributes: cut, fire, noose and trident. Also Pitali: kala-Pidari.

Piyusaharana

Obscure physician god. Hindu (Epic and Paranic). Identified in the texts as the eighteenth of the thirty-nine minor incamations of the god Visnu; said to be a carrier of nectar'.

Poleramma

Plague goddess. Telegu [India]. Associated with smallpox and offered blood sacrifies.

Prabhakari (*light-maker*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: red. Attributes: sun dise on a great lotus

and staff.

Prabhasa (*shining dawn*)

Attendant god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of *vasu* deities answering to the god Indra. Attributes: cup, hook, *Sakti* and staff.

Pracanda (*furious*)

Distinct form of the goddess Durga. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of *navadurgas* or nine durgas'.

Pradhana (*most important*)

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of nine *navasaktis* who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras.*

Pradipatara

Minor goddess of light. Buddhist (Mahayana).

Pradyumna

God of love. Early Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. The son of Krsna and Rukmini, and the elder brother of Sama, Equating with Kamadeva, or Kama returned to life after being killed by Siva. In later Hinduism regarded as an *avatara* of Visnu with consorts including Mayadevi and Kakudmati.

Prajapati (*lord of creatures*)

Primordial being. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). In the Vedic legends he is described variously as the creator of the world and the creator of heaven and earth. He is an androgynous being who impregnated himself by fusing elements of mind and speech. In later epics he is the guardian deity of the sexual organ. Prajapati is also a name of the god Brahma in later Hinduism.

Prajna (*wisdom*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Regarded as the *Sakti* of a number of Mahayana gods, or specifically as the *Sakti* of Adibuddha.

Prajnantaka

God. Buddhist. One of the *dikpalas*, guardians of the southern direction. Colour: white. Attributes: jewel, lotus, sword, trident and white staff.

Prajnaparamita

Goddess. Buddhist. The personification of the religious text *Prajnaparamita* and the *Sakti* of Vajradhara. An emanation of the deity Aksobbhya. Also a philosophical deity, the spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. The embodiment of transcendental intuition. She stands upon a lotus. Colour: white, reddish white or yellow. Attributes: blue lotus, book, cup, knife, jewelled staff and red lotus.

Prajinapti (*teaching*)

Goddess of learning. Jain (India). One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Prajnavardhani (growth of wisdom)

Deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group of dharanis. Colour: white. Attributes: staff and sword on blue lotus.

Pralaya —the Hindu "Armageddon"

Hinduism also talks about Armageddon (Revelation 16: 16) as Pralaya (great deluge). Very descriptive details of Pralaya are written in the Srimad Mahabhagavata. As far as Hinduism is concerned. Pralaya or deluge is not something that shows despair but hope. Hindus firmly believe in the Law of Karma and Pralaya as a necessity to take care of the collective Karmas of multitudes of people. Even the Yadavas (blood-relations of Lord Krishna) and Krishna himself were wiped out of this earth when their actions warranted their extinction from the earth.

Hindus also believe in the cyclical nature of "creation and annihilation" of the Universe. In the Code of Manu, it is written that the Universe and creation come and go in a cyclical order. *There is no end to this drama of "creation and annihilation of the universe."* There four Yugas are; Krita Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga, and Kali Youga. The total time-period of the four Yugas is

called a Kalpa. At the end of each Kalpa or Kali Yuga, the universe is destroyed by Pralaya or great floods. Then another Kalpa begins. It is said that at the time of Pralaya, Lord Vishnu will take his 10th Avatar known as Kalki (the man on the white horse) Lord Krishnal lived in Dvapara Youga. We are now living in Kali Yuga. It is said that the state of affairs will be the worst in Kali Yuga.

Pramudita *(delighted)*

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: red. Attributes: jewel and staff.

Pranasakti

Goddess. Hindu. A terrifying deity ruling the 'centres of physical life'. She stands upon a lotus. Attribute; a cup filled with blood.

Prandidhanaparamita

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. Spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: blue. Attributes; jewel and sword on blue lotus.

Pranidhanavasita (*control of abstract contemplation*)

Minro goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour; yellow. Attributes: blue lotus and jewelled staff.

Pranayama

Pranayama plays a very important role in Raja Yoga. There is no proper definition of Prana. Some say it means "vital currents" in the body. However, Prana does not mean Breath or Thought. Ayama means Restraint. So Pranayama means restraint of vital currents in the body. Some define Prana as the absloute link between *absolute consciousness* and the mind and the body. The intimate relationship that exists amongst Prana, Mind, Thought and Breath is utilized by different schools of yoga. In some parts of Raja Yoga, *chitta vritti* or mental vibrations are controlled by will power and Prana indirectly comes under the control of the mind.

Breath is not *Prana*, but sages have found a direct connection

between the two. Sage Patanjali says in the *Yoga Sutra*, "Regulation of breath control or control of Prana is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation." In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna explains *Pranayama* in a very elaborate way. Some offer Prana (outgoing breath) in Apana (incoming breath) and Apana in Prana, restraining the passage of Prana and Apana, absorbed in Pranayama. The Gita gives an image of two snakes both devouring each other and attaining a stage of nothingness in the above simile. Anyway, the first step in Pranayama is rhythmic breating. By *controlling the motions of lungs and respiratory organs, one can indirectly control Prana that is vibrating inside all of us.* Some practise a kind of Paranayama called Puraka (filling in). Some practise a kind of Pranayama called Rechaka (emptying). Some practise *Kumbhaka*, where the breath is held in the body. Usually the practice of Pranayama is a combination of Puraka, Kumbhaka, and Rechaka methoods. There are several types of Pranayama. Besically they are divided into *Adhama, Madhyama* and *Uttama.* This division is according to the time difference in the Puraka (filling in) period. The ratio of time between *Puraka, Kumbhaka,* and *Rechaka* in all thse three methods is 1:4:2. Sagarbha *Pranayama* is that Pranayama which is done along with the japa of Mantra like Gayatri or *Pranava* (Aum). *Kriya Yoga* is the best *Pranayama* method, taught by Hindu saints. Rhythmic breathing is the balance act between Puraka, Kumbhaka and Rechaka stages.

Deep-breathing exercise are not Pranayama. Those exercises can be done by anyone at any time. *Pranayama* should be practised under the guidance of a very competent Guru. *Pranayama* should not be done by reading a book or listening to a narration. The body has to be conditioned to accept the power that is generated within it by the control of Prana. Proper dietetic control is also necessary to achieve better results. Usually Pranayama is practised by the aspirant sitting in *Padmasana* (lotus posture). It can also be practised in *Shavasana* (dead-body posture).

Hamsa or Baby *Pranayama* is the easiest of all types of Pranayamas. It can be done by anyone, anywhere and under any conditions. *Hamsa* meaus swan. It signifies that this method is as pure and as tranquil as a swan. *In this method, the aspirant watches*

the incoming breath (which makes the sound Ham) and the outgoing breath (which makes the sound Sa) without controlling the breathing activity in any manner. In this method, one indirectly chants the Mantra "Sah Aham" meaning "He is I". There are no negative effects on the body. It helps in relaxation and annihilation of *stress* in the body. The first result of this method will be direamless sleep or Sushupti.

Are breathing exercises monopoly of Hinduism? Absolutely not. In the Chinese religion Taoism, there is a breathing exercise known as T-AI-SI popularly known as *embryonic respiration.* The Chinese practise this breathing exercise for long life and it has no spiritual value. In some ways *taoism* resembles Hindu Hatha Yoga.

Control of breathing was also practised by *Sufis*—the Muslim mystics. The technique of *Dhikr* resembles some of the Hindu breathing exercises. Even in Christianity there are some evidences of using breathing for spiritual enlightenment.

Prasannatara (*the gracious Tara*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Regarded as a form of Ratnasambhava who tramples on Hindu gods including Indra, Brahma, Rudra and Upendra. Colour: yellow. Carries a large variety of attributes. Three-eyed.

Prasuti

Goddess. Hindu. The daughter of Svayambhuva Manu and one of the consorts of Daksa.

Pratibhanakuta (*excellent intelligence*)

God. Buddhist. A *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Colour: yellow or red. Attribute: sword on lotus.

Pratibhanapratisamvit

Goddess of context analysis. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of a group of four. Colour: gree. Attributes: three-pronged staff and bell.

Paratisamvit (*analytical science*)

Generic name for four goddesses. Buddhist (Vajrayana). The

personifications of logical analysis.

Pratyangira (*whose speech is directed westward*)

Goddess of terrifying aspect. Hindu. She rides upon a lion. Attributes: cup, drum, flaming hair, snake noose and trident.

Pratyusa (*scorching*)

Attendant god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of *vasu* deities answering to the god Indra. Attributes: hook, knife, *Sakti* and sword.

Prithivi

See Prthivi.

Priti (*pleasure*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Purnic). A daughter of Daksa and consort of the god of love Kamadeva. One of twelve Saktis associated with the god Visnu in his varrious incarnations.

Priyadarsana (*pleasant to the eye*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Prsni

Primordial earth goddess. Hindu (Vedic). The so-called 'dappled cow' of the *Rg Veda*. She is also perceived as the brightly coloured *soma* stalk and its linked with a male counterpart, also Prsni, the dappled bull of the sun.

Prthivi (*earth mother*)

Origin Hindu (Vedic) [India]. Mother goddess of earth.

Known period of worship circa 1500 BC and probably earlier through to present day.

Synonyms Bhudevi.

Centre(s) of cult none specific. *Art references* sculptures in bronze and other metals; stone reliefs, etc.

Literary sources Rg Veda and other texts including the *Atharva-veda.*

In Vedic literature Prthivi is the female aspect of the creator god Dyaus Pitar. The two formed the once inseparable primordial cosmos until separated by the god Varuna. According to one illogical legend of Prthvi's geneology, she was the daughter of Prithu who had granted the blessing of life on earth and who, in her turn, had emerged from the arm of the corpse of King Vena.

Prthivi is a chthonic or earth goddess with whom the sky god Dyaus couples when he fertilizes her with rain. She is said to kiss the centre of the world and she symbolizes the eternal patience and resilience of the earth, permitting herself to be abused without rancour. She is also a vegetation goddess, the source of all plant life. In some legends Prthivi is perceived as the consort of the rain god Indra, who protects her, and of lesser-known creation deities including Parjanya. Prajapait and Visvakarma. Visnu strides over her body. As the inseparable partner of Dyaus she is rarely addressed alone, though in the *Atharva-veda* Dyaus is not mentioned. Usually the pair are referred to as Dyavaprthivi. Though the goddess was present in early Indian culture, she persists into late Hinduism and may be associated with Visnu as one of the personifications of his *Sakti.*

Many Hindus worship Prthivi at dawn and before ploughing and sowing. In the Punjab, the first milk from a cow is offered to the goddess by allowing it to soak into the earth. With similar sentiment a dying man may be laid on the earth to be received by Prthivi.

Prthu (*broad*)

Creator god. Hindu (Vedic). The head of the solar pantheon who introduced

agriculture to the human race and who, in later Hinduism, is identified as an *avatara* of Visnu.

Pukkasi

Goddess of terrifying appearance. Buddhist (Vajrayana) and

Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of *gauri*. Colour: yellowish white or blue. Attribute: water-jar.

Punarvasu

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma). Concerning with restoring lost or stolen property.

Punitavati (*purified*)

Local goddess. Hindu. Worshipped at Karaikkal near Ammaiyar. The deification of a Brahman businessman's wife.

Puranai (*fullness*)

Mother goddess. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. A *navasakti* and one of the consorts of Aiyanar.

Puranas And Srimad Bhagavatam

The Puranas are religious stories which expound truths. Just like the parables told by Jesus Christ, these stories are told to common folk to make them understand the higher truths of life. According to Jesus Christ, the mysteries of the universe were revealed to those who are spiritually awake but to others those mysteries have to be explained in parables. In that note, *Puranas* can be called The *Vedas of the Common Folk* for they present all the mysteries, through myth and legend.

The word *Purana* means ancient. The *Puranas* always siress devotion to God. Almost all *Puranas* dela with the creation and destruction of the Universe, the genealogy of the gods and saints and details about the Solar and Lunar dynasties. Some of the them like *Mahabhagavatam* have description of future events in similarity with Christian revelation.

Among the large number of Puranas 18 are called major *Puranas* or *Mahapuranas*... Each of these provides a list of all the 18 Puranas including itself but the names in the list in some Puranas slightly vary. So much so we have a list of 20 major *Puranas*. Out of 20 Puranas, six are addressed to Lord Vishnu, six are addressed to Lord Siva and six are addressed to Lord Brahma. Puranas are

written in "Question and Answer" form. They consist principally of stories about Hindu gods, goddesses, supernatural beings, seers and men. The Puranas do not have a specific date of composition, but some say that the date of composition started from the sixth century A.D.

The six Puranas addressed to Lord Vishnu are 1. Vishnu Purana 2. Narada Purana 3. Srimad Bhaghavata Purana 4. Garuda Purana 5. Padma Purana 6. Varaha Purana.

The six Puranas addressed to Lord Siva are 1. Matsya Purana 2. Kurma Purana 3. Linga Purana 4. Vayu Purana 4. Skanda Purana 6. Agni Purana.

The six Puranas addressed to lord Brahma are 1. Brahma Purana 2. Brahmanda Purana 3. Brahma-Vaivasvata Purana or Brahma-Vaivarta Purana 4. Markandeya Purana 5. Bhavishya Purana 6. Vamana Purana.

According to many Siva Purana (Saiva Purana) and Harivamsa Purana are also major Puranas, even though they did not come under the list of 18 major Puranas.

Yes indeed. The minor Puranas are known Upa Puranas. Believe it or not, there are at least 26 or 27 minor Puranas.

They are as follows :

1. Aditya 2. Ascharya 3. Ausanasa 4. Bhaskara (Surya) 5. Devi 6. Saiva Purana —some call it a major Purana 7. Durvasa 8. Kalika 9. Kalki 10. Kapila 11. Mahesvara 12. Marichi 13. Nandikesvara 14. Narada 15. Narasimha 16. Parasara 17. Samba 18. Sanathkumara 19. Sivadharma 20. Suta-Samhita 21. Usanas 22. Varuna 23. Vayu 24. Yuga. I am very sure that the list I am giving you need not be a complete list. There still could be Puranas in Hinduism, unknown even to the great apostles of Hindu doctrine.

It is a very important scripture to Hindus and specially to the Hare Krishna devotees. It contains 18,000 stanzas. It has 12 chapters known as *Skandhas*. It was written by sage Badarayana also known as Veda Vyasa. The greatest exponent of the Srimad Bhagavatam is sage Suka, the son of Sage Veda Vyasa. This book was recited to

the King *Parikshit*, the last of the Pandava dynasty, by Sage Kuka one week before the doomed death of the king by a serpent bite. Much of the book is a dialogue between King Parikshit and Sage Suka.

The Srimad Bhagavatam consists of stories of all Avataras of Lord Vishnu. The 10th chapter of the book deals with the story of Lord Krishna in detail. The last chapter deals exclusively with the Kaliyuga, the present age, and the last Avatar of Lord Vishnu, Kalki. There is also a vivid description of *Pralaya* or the great deluge in the last chapter. This book is an authority on Vaishnavism in Hinduism and as I said before, the most important scripture of Hare Krishnas.

According to Srimad Bhagavatam the universe and creation came into existence because God as a sport (Lila) willed to do so. A realized devotee sees himself and all beings as part and parcel of God. According to this scripture, there are nine different ways of exhibiting *Bhakti* or devotion to God; like listening to stories of God, meditating, serving etc. and finally *Self- surrender* to the will of God.

Purandhi

Minor goddess of prosperity. Hindu (Vedic). Associated with the acquisition of wealth and sometimes identified with Indra or other male deities.

Purusa

Primeval creator god. Hindu (Vedic). Described as the primordial being from whom the cosmos was formed, possibly the male component of the great mother, Mata. In later Hinduism regarded as an avatara of Visnu.

Purvahadrapada

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevclent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of candra (Soma).

Purvaphalguni

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A moderately

disposed naksatra; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Purvasadha

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A moderately disposed *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Pusan (*nourisher*)

Sun god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). The original Vedic list of six descendants of the goddess Aditi or adityas, all of whom take the role of sun gods, was, in later times, enlarged to twelve, including Pusan. He is the charioteer of the sun and a guardian deity of journeys and pathways. Colour; golden. Attributes: four lotuses.

Puspa (*flower)*

Mother godess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of the group of *astamataras* (mothers). Colour: white. Attribute: a flower.

Puspatara (*flower-Tara)*

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: white. Attribute : a forest garland.

Pusti (*growth*)

Fertility goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). In northern India she is the second consort of Visnu, but elsewhere may also be linked with Sarasvati and named as a consort of Ganesha.

Pusya

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

R

Radha (*prosperity*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) India). Goddess of emotional love.

Known period of worship circa 1000 BC and earlier until present day.

Synonyms Bhumidevi [Southern India]. *Centre (s)* of cult none.

Art references virtually none.

Literary sources later Puranic literature—the works of Vidyapati (1352—1448), including the *Brahma-vaivarta-purana.*

Radha is a goddess whose role is limited to that of a favoured mistress of Krsna. She only emerges fully as a goddess from the twelth century AD onwards and she is one of the central figures in the poetry of Vidyapati, who places her as a cosmic queen. One of the creation accounts describes how Krsna divides himself into two parts, one of which is Radha. They make love for an age and their sweat and heavy breathing become the world's oceans and winds. Radha gives birth to the golden egg of the universe, which floats on the primal waters for a year until the god Visnu emerges. Other mythology accounts that Radha enjoys an illicit relationship with an adolescent Krsna. Their tryst in set is the village of Vraja and in the surrounding forests at a time before Krsna takes as his consort Rukmini and later Satyabhama.

Radha is sometimes considered to be an *avatara* of Laksmi and thus a consort of Krsna, and in southern India, as Bhumidevi, she becomes associated with Sarasvati. She always stands as the

personification of emotional love in stark contrast to Sati, the faithful and legitimate consort of Visnu's other *avatara*, Rama. In the bhakti cult she symbolizes the yearning of the human soul to be drawn to Krsna. Attribute: a lotus.

Rahu (*seizer*)

Primordial cosmic deity. Hindu. The son of Kasyapa or Rudra, according to legend he seizes the sun and moon to generate eclipses. Rahu is depicted with four hands and a tail, or as a head alone, his body having been destroyed by Visnu. He stands upon a chariot drawn by eight black horses. Colour: dark blue. Attributes: half moon, knife, sword and trident.

Rajamatangi

Goddess. Hindu. She stands upon a lotus. Attributes: blue lotus, lute, moon and parrot.

Raja Yoga

Raja Yoga in essence is a very scientific path of God- realization. In this path, God is more or less treated as *Pure Energy.* Sage Patanjali, the authur of the *Yoga Sutras,* was the first to systematise the practices of this technical Yoga.

Patanjali defined *Yoga as Citta-Vritti-Nirodha.*

Yoga — means union with the divine or Salvation.

Chitta — means Mind.

Vritti — means Modifications or Vibrations.

Nirodha — means Stoppage or Suppression or Restraint.

So according to Sage Patanjali, "The union with the Divine or salvation means stoppage of the vibrations or modifications of the mind". As per Patanjali, modifications of the mind are fivefold and are painful or non-painful in nature. They are *Right Knowledge, Wrong Knowledge, Fancy, Sleep* and *Memory.*

The Practice of Raja Yoga started from the Vedic age. The Bhagavad Gita glorifies and recommends it by starting with a statement, "Raja Yoga, Raja Guhyam (kingly guarded secret),

Pavitram (the most purified), Uttamam (the best), Pratyakshavagamam (immediate result giving), Dharmyam-Kartum (steadfast to Dharma),...", Bhagavad Gita. Chap. 9-2).

In Raja Yoga, a devotee tries to achieve *a state above the mind and* in a way tries to achieve *a mindless state*. It is very difficult to explain it in simple terms. A student of parapsychology may be able to understand the scientific aspect of Raja Yoga better than anyone else. The ordinary man whose consciousness is confined to the lower mind can conceive of only concrete images of objects, which are derived through the sense- organs. In a nutshell, for a perfected Raja Yogi, thinking is a voluntary process all the time, unlike most of us who think so many things involuntarily. We think about the pros and cons of every issue, even if we do not want to think about the issue at all. For example, if we decide not to think of monkeys for the next hour, we will be thinking about monkeys only for the next hour. That is the way the mind works all the time.

The Patanjali Yoga Sutra consists of 196 slokas. In his book. Patanjali has never stated or mentioned that this is the only way for God-realization, so much so that the state of mind as well as Godrealization which he expounds can be achieved by other religious practices also.

Raja Yoga mentions eight kinds of disciplines: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahare, Dharana, Dhayana and Samadhi.

Yama — means Abstinence from all vices.

Niyama — means Observance of purity, contentment etc.

Asana—means a posture suitable for meditation. Pranayama - consists of prolonged expiration (Rechaka); Inspiration (Purakha); Retention (Kumbhaka) of breath. This exercise is upposed to be done only under the proper guidance of a realized master of Guru. In the Pranayama exercise, the devotee is supposed to control the vital currents in the body.

Pratyahara — means retraction or withdrawal of sense-organs from sense-objects.

Dharana—means the fixisng of mind on any object.

Dhyana — means meditation.

Samadhi — is the final state. He who meditates ultimately attains Samadhi. In that state the mind loses its complete identity and assumes a formless state, even though it can assume the form of any object it contemplates on. In Samadhi, the devotee realises the ultimate truth. *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and *Savikalpa Samadhi* are the two types of Samadhis devotees attain in their divine pursuit.

Raka

Minor goddess of prosperity. Hindu (Vedic). Associated with the acquisition of wealth.

Rakta-Yamari (*red Yamari*)

God. Buddhist. An emanation of Aksobhya and a variety of Yamari. Colour: red.

Rama or Ram Chandar (*pleasing*)

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The seventh *avatara* (sun aspect) of Visnu. Rama began as a comparatively minor incarnation who became one of the great heroes of the *Ramayana* epic, as well as featuring in the *Mahabharata*. The son of Dasaratha and Kausalya, he was a king of Ayodhya who, in the *Ramayana*, slew the demon Ravana that had captured his consort Sita and was upheld as a deity *par excellence* in respect of manhood and honour, though his subsequent treatment of his wife might be regarded as cavali (see Sita). Rama rides in a chariot and is depicted in human form with two arms, typically holding a sugar-cane bow and with a quiver at his shoulder. Also Ramaçandra.

Ramayana

The two famous Epics or *Ithihasas* are the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Sage Valmiki wrote the former and sage Veda Vyasa son of sage Parasara, wrote the latter.

The story about sage Valmiki is in the Uttara Kanda, a supplement to the great Ramayana epic.

In the early part of his life, sage Valmiki was a highway robber

with no name. He used to rob travellers to support his wife and children. One day the great saint *Narada* was passing by and the robber attacked the holy man. *Narada* asked Valmiki, why he (Valmiki) is robbing him (Narada)?...''To take care of my family,'' answered the robber. ''When you rob a person, you also incur a lot of sin. Would your family share that sin also,'' asked the great master. ''I am sure they will,'' answered the robber. ''All right,'' said the sage. ''Why don't you tie me up here and go back home, ask every one, whether they are ready to share your sins along with the money you are bringing home.'' The robber agreed. He tied the sage against a tree and ran to his simple home. There he accosted all the members of his family with the question, ''Will you share my sins?'' All the members of his family, including his wife said an emphatic ''No''. For the first time in his life, the robber understood the truth...With tears trickling down on his cheeks he ran to sage Narada and begged for his forgiveness. The sage taught the robber how to worship God. It is said that the robber was so engrossed in meditation that ants built ant-hills surrounding him. Finally after years, it is said, a voice came from nowhere, asking the meditating robber to get up from his meditation and the voice named him Valmiki, meaning. He that was born in the ant-hill. This is the story of Valmiki.

Once the saint Valmiki was walking through a forest saw two doves romantically involved with each other. As the sage was engrossed in that pleasant signt, a cruel arrow passed by him and struck the male dove. The female dove went down in remorse and started chirping around the dead companion. The sage saw the hunter and called him a wretch. Immediately Valmiki felt, as a saint he should not have spoken like that. Then a voice from the sky said: ''Oh! Valmiki, your words are poetic, don't be distressed. This is the right time for you to write the story of Lord Rama.''Upon the instructions from that voice from the sky. Valmiki wrote the immortal poem Ramayana, the story of Lord Rama. Sage Valmiki wrote the whole Ramayana as the narration of him by the crying female dove. In the beginning of each chapter, he makes the reader aware of the fact that it is a crying bird which is narrating this great story of Lord Rama.

In brief, Ramayana is the story of Lord Rama and princess Sita. It is a poem with 24,000 couplets. The story in brief is as follows. Once upon a time, there was a king named Dasaratha who had three wives, namely, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. Unluckily Dasaratha had no children through any of the three queens. So he conducted a special sacrifice by name Puthra Kameshti Yagam. Out of the fire of the sacrifice came an elixir which all the three queens consumed. As a result. queen Kausalya had a son named Rama, queen Kaideyi had a son named Bharata, queen Sumitra had two sons named Lakshmana and Sumitra had two sons named Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Rama and Lakshmana became very fast friends from child hood onwards and so too Bharata and Shatrughna. When the children attained puberty, Rama married princess Sita, the orphan daughter of the great King Janaka. Thereupon. King Dasaratha thought of renouncing the throne and making prince Rama the king. The whole country rejoiced at the news, except queen Kaikeyi and her maide Mandara Finally jealousy of queen Kaikeyi made Rama to give up the kingdom and seek the jungles along with his sweet wife Sita and his beloved brother Lakshmana. In the jungles, poor Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, the demon king of Sri Lanka. Lord Rama went to rescue her with the aid of monkey King Sugreeva and his prime minister Hanuman. In a great battle, Ram annihilated Ravana and his army. Rama along with princess Sita finally returned to the kingdom of Ayodhya. Ramayana is a very cherished poem of the Hindus. The holy Deepavali festival is a celebration of the victory of Rama over demon-king Ravana. Deepavali or Diwali-The Festival of lights is celebrated throughout India. Rama is an avatar of Lord Vishnu and Ramayana is a story which projects the Hindu ideals of life. Rama is the perfect man and husband and Sita is the perfect wife and Lakshmana is the perfect brother. There are many versions of Ramayana. The Hindi version is written by sage Tulasi Das. The Malayalam version is written by Thunchath Ezuthachan. The original text of Ramayana is written in a very stylish Sanskrit language.

Ram Chandra

Lord Ram is the seventh Avatar (incarnation) of Vishnu. Born

during the second age of the world called Treta Yug, he is the immortal hero of the great religious epic of India, the Ramayan. This epic seems to have been written sometime between the fith and the first century B.C. though broadlines of Ram's noble life were known to the residents of this land much earlier.

Ram occupies a very considerable place in the religious life of India and in the religious history of the world. He is the embodiment of righteousness and is believed to be the incarnation of the solar aspect of Vishnu. The most ancient and most striking of the tales of Ram Chandra is the ramayan, written by sage Valmiki, who is also said to be the father of epic style of poetry.

Innumerable temples are scattered all over India having the images or Ram, his younger brother Lakshman and his consort, Sita. In all images Ram is invariable depicted to have two arms and not four, which emphasises the character of Ram as a human being and the way god Vishnu preferred to adopt this form just to re-establish the golden age of justice and happiness. The expression of Ram Rajya even today means the reign in which peace and prosperity prevails.

Ram's story follows this way. At the end of the Treta Yug or the second age of the world the sages, the holy men and even gods found themselves in great terror and alarm at the misdeeds of Ravan, the demoniac king of Lanka, and the horde of his followers. Ravan had pleased Brahma by austere penances and Brahma had given him the boon of invulnerability from the wrath of any god or gods. Thus being fortified Ravan started his reign of terror and misused his power to terrorise people in order to subdue them. All the gods then decided to approach Brahma to relieve them of the looming danger and deliver the sages of their sufferings, which were the result of the boon bestowed by Brahma and misused by Ravan. Brahma disclosed to them that Ravan, in his pride, had thought that only gods could overpower him therfore he did not care to include man in the category of those who could subdue him and only a being in man's shape could kill him.

The gods now reached Vishnu to whom they prayed for deliverance because he was responsible for preserving of heavenly and earthly order. Vishnu promised to descend on the earth in the

shape of a man by being born as a son to Dashrath, a king of the solar race, reigning at Ayodhya.

When King Dashrath was performing a religious sacrifice, the fire-god emerged before him out of the sacred fire and gave him a pot of nectar for his three wives to drink. King Dashrath gave half of this nectar to his seniormost wife, Kaushalya, who brought forth Ram with one half of the divine essence; a quarter to Kaikeyi, the second wife, whose son Bharat was endowed with a quarter of divine essence; and the fourth part to sumitra, the juniormost wife, who brought forth two sons, Lakshman and Shatrughan, each having one-eighth part of divinty. All flour brothers were deeply attached to each other but Lakshman was more especially devoted to Ram and Shatrughan to Bharat. Lord Vishnu had thus kept his word to gods and was born as Prince Ram in the household of King Dashrath.

Another legend gives the version that Dashrath divided the divine nectar between his two senior wives, Kaushalya and Kaikeyi only and that when the younger, Sumitra, asked for some, each of the senior ones gave one half from their respective shares. So Sumitra received two quarters and gave birth to two sons—one part received from Kaushalya gave birth to Lakshman who was ever attached to Ram and the other part received from Kaikeyi gave birth to Shatrughan who was more attracted towards Bharat.

All the four brothers grew up together at Ayodhaya and learnt fast various subjects covering arts of peace and methods of wars. While they were still young and Ram had turned only sixteen, one highly revered saint, named Vishwamitra, came to king Dashrath. He requested for Ram's help to protect him and his disciples from demons, who had been interfering with his usual religious sacrifices to gods. Very reluctantly Dashrath sent Ram and his younger son Lakshman to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra. Ram cleared the hermitage of all demons and killed a powerful female-demon named Taraka. Sage Vishwamitra was very pleased and taught Ram precious pieces of rare wisdom. He also gave Ram some celestial weapons with extraordinary powers.

Vishwamitra took the brothers to the court of king Janak, the ruler

of Mithila—a territory near Ayodhya. Janak had a very beautiful daughter by the name of Sita. At that time Sta had grown and her father wanted to marry her to a talented and strong prince. Janak had in his possession a divine bow of great weight, which god Shiv had given to him as a gift. The King arranged for a competition as a prelude to Sita's marriage. He announced before the assembly of competing princes that anyone who could lift and stretch the string of this bow, would win the hand of his daughter. None could succeed except Ram who stretched this old bow with such force that it broke into two pieces. This way Sita was married to Ram amidst joy and gaiety.

The breaking of Shiva's divine bow by Ram into two pieces led to an interesting episode. Parsuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu, was alive at that time. As mentioned in the part dealing with Vishnu, this sage-in-incarnation, to take revenge against Kshatriyas for the murder of his father, had exterminated the members of this caste a number of times. He just at that moment, reached the court of King Janak. Seeing the bow broken into parts he became furious and started rebuking the prince of Ayodhya. He challenged Ram to combat with him and settle the score. However, the dispute was ultimately peacefully settled and Parsuram too was convinced of the greatness of Ram.

There at Ayodhya. King Dashrath felt that he had been growing old. He decided to formally announce the name of his eldest son Ram as the next successor to his throne. What happened then was that Kaikeyi, the second and the most favourite wife of Dashrath, and a hunch-backed maidservant, named Manthra. She was crooked not only in body but in mind too. Though Kaikeyi, like a good step-mother, loved Ram without malice, this female slave Manthra, playing the role of a wicked court lady, worked upon the maternal instincts of Kaikeyi. She instigated her mistress against her step-son and pleaded that this action of the king showed no regards for the sentiments of the woman, whom he pretended to love so much. Why should Bharat, the son of Kaikeyi, not be declared the heir-apparent of the kingdom of Ayodhya?

Her baser instincts being aroused, Kaikeyi decided to defeat

Dashrath's plan of declaring Ram as the next king of Ayodhya. She remembered the old days when king Dashrath, infatuated by his wife's charms and feeling grateful on account of her one time courage in saving the king's life, had given the word to grant her two boons. She remonstrated with her husband and reminded him of his word of honour given earlier. She asked him to declare Bharat as the next king of Ayodhya and also to send away Ram for fourteen years in exile away from Ayodhya. After so many arguments and with utmost reluctance the king yielded to the pressure and agreed to send Ram into exile for fourteen years and to install Bharat on the throne of Ayodhya in his place.

Ram, as an obedient son, bade good-bye to his parents and the people of Ayodhya. He together with his wife Sita moved towards the south. His younger brother, Lakshman, the son of Sumitra, also accompanied both of them. All the three settled at Chitrakut in the Dandak forest between the river Yamuna and godavari. King Dashrath could not bear this shock and departed from the world. His other son Bharat was called from the place of his maternal uncle, where he had gone with the other brother Shatrughan. On his return Bharat was asked to ascend the throne, which he refused poin-blank stating that the rightful heir to this throne was the eldest brother, Ram Chandra. Bharat together with numerous courtiers and enthusiastic people of Ayodhya set out for the forest. Both the brothers met and a long discussion ensued. Ram declined to return to the kingdom without completing the exile term of fourteen years while Bharat did not agree to sit on the throne. It was finally agreed that Bharat should return and act for the time being till Ram returned as the latter's vicegerent Ram's footwears were carried by Bharat to Ayodhya as a sign of regard and obeisance to the elder brother. The pair of shoes was to be placed always at the foot of the throne in recognition of Ram's supremacy.

For a period of ten years Ram together with his wife and brother moved in the forests from one hermitage to another. Then he met near Vindhyachal mountains sage Agastya, who advised Ram to set up his abode at Panchavati near the banks of the river Godavari. Ram with Sita and Lakshman accordingly settled at Panchvati.

This place was adjacent to the regions inhabited by Rakshashas (demoniac tribes) and had been attracting perodical visits by them. One Soorpa Nakha, a sister of the mighty demon king of Lanka, named Ravan, visited the place and was enchanted by the physical beauty of Ram. When she made advances, Ram rebuked her. On her scurrilous remarks against Sita, Lakshman could not control his rage and chopped off the nose of Soorpa Nakha. To avenge this insult she returned accompanied by her two other brothers, Khar and Dushan, who also brought a big army with them. In the battle both the brothers of Soorpa Nakha were defeated and their army routed.

Being thus thwarted Soorpa Nakha repaired to Lanka, where her mightiest brother was the ruler. She wept before Ravan and pleaded for revenge against this supreme humiliation suffered by her. Ravan took his best confidant Marich with him and made plans to teach Ram the lesson for life. Marich lured Ram away from the hermitage on a hunting expedition by himself posing as the prey. Lakshman was left alone on guard with sita. Maricha on false pretext succeeded in sending Lakshman too on a mission to search for Ram.

When thus left alone Ravan disguised himself as a Sadhu (Mendicant) and forcibly kidnapped Sita from her but in Panchvati.

The anger and sorrow of Ram at the disappearance of Sita knew no bounds. He was determined to trace his wife and to punish the culprits. He and Lakshman started the search in right earnest. On the way they won the friendship of the chieftain of monkey tribe. His name was Sugreev, whose throne in the capital, named Kishkandha, was usurped by his own brother Balee. Ram killed Balee and restored the throne to Sugreev. This paved the way for a solid alliance that helped Ram in a great way in his battle against Ravan and his forces. As a result of this friendhip Ram not only got massive support of the huge army of Sugreev but also found a highly loyal and efficient general named Hanuman, who proved to be the greatest asset to Ram.

To prove his gratitude to Ram, Sugreev sent a great number of his monkeys in search of Sita. These monkeys went southwards and on

the way found out that the demon Ravan had stolen Sita and kept her as his captive in Lanka. Immediately Hanuman became ready to go to her as Ram's emissary.Ram gave his ring to Hanuman to convince Sita of the latter's genuine status. As Hanuman was the offspring of the god of winds, he concentrated his powers and leaped across so many miles over the sea. He saw Sita being held as a prisoner in a garden of roses, called *Ashoka-vatika.* He showed the queen the ring of Ram and assured her that he would be soon comming to rescue Sita from the clutches of Ravan.

Meanwhile Ravan's guards managed to catch Hanuman and brought him in the court of Ravan. As legend goes before being caught Hanuman succeeded in killing so many guards including one of the sons of Ravan, named Akshaya. Then Ravan's mightiest son, Indrajit was sent and he could bring the monkey general before Ravan. The king ordered his servants to dip the monkey's tail in oil and set it on fire. The enraged Hanuman with his tail in flames leaped from one house to the other thus setting so many of them aflame. Eventually he left Lanka and reached Ram's camp to give him the news about Sita's plight.

Now Ram and Lakshman together with the big army of monkeys proceeded to invade Lanka. Reaching the sea-shore Ram first worshipped Lord Shiv and prayed for the success of his mission. He then requested the ocean to devise some way so that he with his vast-army could cross over the sea and invade Lanka. The ocean appeared before Ram and replied, "Lord Ram, every element has certain nature of its own and it cannot be altered. I cannot dry the water-bed to help you. The only way to cross me is by building a bridge. Among the army personnel of yours there is one ape named Nal. He is the son of the god of construction, Vishwakarma and Nal has a blessing that whatever he would throw in the water would not sink but float." At the command of Nal, rocks were brought and he threw them into the sea. A long bridge was thus built connecting Lanka with the shore on Ram's side. The sea was crossed and Ram together with his army reached the outskirits of Lanka.

Fierce fighting ensued. Many of the mighty generals of Ravan and

a great number of his soldiers were killed in the battles. Then came forward Kumbhakaran, the younger brother of Ravan. A giant in body and a lion in valour, he fought bravely against Ram and his allies. He started devouring the monkeys. However, the agile monkeys, when the giant put them in this mouth, came out of his ears and nostrils. Ram with the help of his bow and arrows first cout off his sarms, then his legs. Still he waddled round and continued the fight. Eventually Ram gave him a fatal wound to the neck.

Then came Indrajit, the son of Ravan. In this battle Ram's brother, Lakshman, was severely wounded and became unconscious. The physician prescribed a herb that could save the life of Lakshman. But it grew far away in one of the mountain ranges of the Himalayas and someone had to fetch it before the day-break. The agile Hanuman came forward and moved towards that mountain with the speed of wind. When he brought the herb, the life of Lakshman was saved in time. in the dramatic fight later, Indrajit was also defeated and killed.

Now Ravan himself entered the field of battle. After fierce fighting that lasted many days, Ravan was slain and victory ensued. Sita was thus rescued from the clutches of Ravan. Demanding a proof of her innocence during captivity, Ram desired Sita to pass through a fiery ordeal. Ram did this to convince all sceptics about his wife purity rather than to assure himself. After her innocence was proved, Ram, Sita and Lakshman returned to Ayodhya. This story of Ram has also got an interesting epilogue.

Ram mounted the throne and started fruling over Ayodhya. However some persons in the capital commenced a slander campaign alleging that it was not proper for Ram to shelter Sita after she had been kept by a demon king in his captivity. Ram, therefore, sent Sita in exile. She found refuge in the hermitage of sage Valmiki, where she gave birth to two sons, Lav and Kush. Before long Ram performed the horse sacrifice ceremony, enjoined upon brave kings by holy scriptures. In this ceremony the two sons of Ram, Lav and Kush, challenged their father's supremacy and their identity was eventually disclosed. Ram wanted to repeat the

old fire ordeal in front of the people of his kingdom to prove the fidelity of his wife. However *Prithvi* (the earth), the mother of Sita, opened her bosom and took back her daughter to the great remorse and lamentation of Ram. After completing his mission Ram too left his material body and went back to his heavenly abode.

The festivals associated with Ram's incarnation and celebrated in India are Ram Navmi, Diwali and Dussehra. The first one is associated with the birth of Lord, Ram, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. This birthday of Ram falling on the ninth day of the Hindi month called Chaitra, is celebrated in almost all Vaishnav temples. Congregations are organised, sermons delivered and songs sung by devotees.

Dussehra is the culmination of the ten-day celebrations, organised to exhibit the episodes from the life of Lord Ram. For the first nine days the whole story of Ram is enacted on stage with great pomp and show. On the tenth day the last episode of Ram's victory over Ravan is shown and the effigies of Ravan, his brother Kumbhakaran and his son Indrajit are burnt amidst loud rejoicings. In all the big cities of U.P., Bihar, M.P., Delhi and Mysore this festival is a day of mass celebrations. Lacs of people gather in vast fields and open spaces to witness the burnings of the effigies and the fire works following the same.

Diwali is celebrated, according to one legend, on the day Ram was crowned after his return to Ayodhya with Sita. As Ram had ascended the throne on this day, King Vikram, who probably started the custom of lighting lamps as a part of Diwali festival, selected the same auspicious day for his coronation too. Diwali is the most important festival of trading community in Western India, where money is spent lavishly on this day. Sweets are distributed amongst friends and relatives, public buildings in cities are beautifully illuminated and children are supplied with a good stock of crackers which they use till late hours in the night. Houses are cleansed and neatly white-washed while in business houses new acount books are started.

According to one of the Upanishads, named Ram-purvtapni

Upanished, "Just as the whole nature of the large banyan tree is contained in its tiny seed, so also the whole universe moving and unmoving, is contained in the word-seed Ram".

Ram's name was also the last word uttered by Mahatma Gandhi at the time of his assassination.

Rati

Goddess of sexual desire. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A daughter of Daksa (in some texts Siva) and the consort of the god Kamadeva. One of twelve *Saktis* associated with the god Visnu in his various incarnations. Attribute: a sword.

Rationality of Worship of Many Gods

Even Adi Sankaracharya, the great apostle of Advaita philosophy did not look down upon the practice of worshipping many gods. To begin with, people are at different stages of understanding the truth. To common people who understand only mythology, it is very difficult to realise the fact that *there is only one God.* Let us take electric energy for example. I can explain to you easily with the aid of electron theory, whereas my mother understands it with a statement that "electricity flows like water." The same subject, but both my mother and you understand it in two different ways even though both of you have the same results by using electric energy.

Again Lord Krishna has promised that even if you worship a thousand forms of God, through all those forms you are actually worshipping HIM—not Krishna, the Avatar, but Krishna—the Almighty. When you pray to Jesus Christ, you are not praying to the-Christ—the man, but to Christ—the spirtit -the Almighty.

Finally, by Hindu code of ethics, yogis are warned against tampering with people's beliefs. As per Hinduism, if a person has steadfast faith in his ideals, he will ultimately find the truth. So, however insignificant his method of worship may be the Truth will finally come to him.

As I said before, it is quite all right to worship many gods but one thing devotees have to worry about is the feeling that one form of God is superior to another or the feeling that one's personal God

(*Ishta Devata*) is greater than the neighbour's god. In devotion to God, one is supposed to dissolve the I-ness, or *Erase the Ego.* Instead if one develops Ego by fighting for his God (*Ishta Devata*) then the whole basis of Bhakti Yoga is totally lost. *Ego is cgo in whatever form it comes out and it is better on the part of a devotee to recognize it from its start and eradicate it.*

Remember the fighting between Vaishnavites and Saivites only helped in the downfall of Hinduism and finally Adi Sankaracharya had to come and raise Hinduism to its present glory. So you can have a personal god but try to see your personal god in all the forms of God. You should be able to *worship in a christian church, a Jewish synagogue, a Muslim mosque or a Buddhist vihara and see your personal God in all those places of worship. By doing so you will be able to establish the aneness of God as well as eradicate your Ego which is a stumling block in your spiritual progress.*

Ratnapani (*with a jewl in the hand*)

God. Buddhist. A form of Ratnasambhava and also a *dhyanibodhisattva* or meditation *buddha.* Colour: yellow or green. Attributes: a jewel and the moon disc.

Ratnaparamita

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. Spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: red Attributes: jewelled staff and moon on a lotus.

Ratnasambhava (*born of a jewel*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The third *dhyanibuddha* or meditation *buddha. Known period of worship* cirec 500 BC until present.

Synonyms Ratnaheruka.

Centre (s) or cult pan-Asiatic.

Art references metal and stone sculptures; paintings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of five mystic spiritual counterparts of a human *buddha* in

Vajrayana Buddhism. A product of the Adibuddha who represents the branch of the cosmos concerned with sensation. He originates from the yellow mantra symbol TRAM and lives in the southern paradise. The head of a group of deities who carry jewls and are family symbols, his *Sakti* is Mamaki and he is normally accompanied by to lions or horses. Colour: yellow. Attributes: jewel and three monkish robes. Ratnasambhava is also taken as a tutelary deity in amaism [Tibet] in which case his attributes include a bell and a jewel. Emanations include Aparajita, Jambhala, Mahapratisara, the *paramitas*. Prasannatara, Ratnapari, Vajratara, Vajrayogini and Vasudhara. (See also Aksobhya, Amitabha, Amoghasidhi and Vairocana.) Colour: yellow. Attributes: bell and jewel.

Ratnolka (*jewel meteor*)

Goddess of light and deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group of *dharanis*. Colour: yellow. Attribute: jewelled staff.

Ratnosnisa

God. Buddhist. An *usnisa* deity apparently linked with the guardian sky deities or *dikpalas* in the southern direction. Colour: blue.

Ratri

Goddess of the night. Hindu (Vedic) Ratri is the personification of darkness bedecked with stars. Her sister is Usas, the dawn goddess, who, with Agni the fire god, chases her away. She is perceived as the guardian of eternal law and order in the cosoms and of the waves of time. She is generally a bening deity who offers rest and renewed vigour, and who may be invoked to ensure safety through the hours of darkness. She deposits the gift of morning dew. She also offers a bleaker aspect as one who brings gloom and barrenness.

Raudri

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of nine *navasaktis* who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras*. She may also equate with the terrifying aspect of Parvti as Durga or Kali.

Rbhus (*skilful*)

Sun god. Hindu (Vedic). Identified in the *Rg Veda* as the craftsmen of the gods and linked with the Maruts. They are led by Indra.

Revanta (*with wealth*)

God of hunters. Hindu. The son of Surya and Sanjna. Known mainly from eastern India and Gujarat, he protects mankind against the dangers of the forest. Infrequently depicted in art.

Revati

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Some).

Riddhi (*prosperity*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the consorts of Ganesha, but otherwise very close in appearance to Laksmi. She carries Laksmi's attributes when standing alone.

Riddhivasita (*control of prosperity*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: green. Attribute: moon disc.

Rig Veda

The Rig Veda is the foremost of all Sruti (That which is heard or revealed) literature. It consists of 1,028 hymns with a total of 10, 562 lines which are described in 10 books. A hymn has three basic parts. The first part is an exhortation, the second part is the praise of the deity in the form of a prayer and the third is a special request. The religion explained in the *Rig Veda* can be called *Brahminism* or *Vedism*. In the *Rig Veda* we see the Aryans just settling down in the valleys of the Indus river and worshipping all the powers of nature such as Air (*Vayu*), water (*Varuna*). Sun (*Surya*), Moon (*Soma*), Fire (*Agani*). The Rig Veda does not seem to be scripture composed during a particular period of time but a scripture composed in stages over several centuries.

One of the most important idea that came out of Rig Veda is the

cosmic order named Rta. Rta means *Cosmic and Sacred* order, an ultimate and harmonic structure of reality. Later this cosmic order *Rta* became to be known as *Dharma* or *Sanathana Dharma* or *Righteousness Forever.* Dharma became not only the universal law but also the moral laws of Hinduism.

Even though in Rig Veda, we see an evolving society praying to all aspects of nature, we also see the birth of very advanced thinking within the society. Just read the so called Creation Hymn (Rig Veda X, 129, 6-7).

After all, who knows, and say From where it all came, and how reation takes place?

The Gods (powers of nature) themselves came after the creation

So who knows truly when it has happened?

When all creation originated?

He (Almighty), whether he fashioned it or whether he did not,

He (Almighty) knows... or may be even he does not know.

There is no partieular author for Rig Veda. It is the collective work of many great sages. One of the most important sacrifices in the *Rig Veda* is the *Soma Sacrifice.* Soma is narcotic beverage prepared from a plant which many think is none other than mushroom. The Rig Veda does not shed any light on birth rituals but *Vivaha* (marriage) and cremation of the dead are dealt with. Of all the gods described in the Rig Veda, *Rudra* is the most important. The popular caste system is also referred to in this scripture. There are also references to the transmigration of souls from body to body.

What exactly are the teachings of the upanishads?

As I mentioned before, the Upanishads are the last of *Sruti* (that which is heard or revealed) literature. Most of the Upanishads are in the form of dialogues among saints and between gods and saints. *The Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad* and *Chandogya Upanishad* are the longest Upanishads. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan said : "So numerous are their suggestions of truth, so various are their guesses at God, that almost anybody may seek in them what he wants and find what

he seeks, and every school of dogmatics may congratulate itself on finding its own doctrine in the sayings of the Upanishads.''

So the Upanishads teachings are very vast and complex and their impact on Hinduism is very difficult to assess. The Upanishads actually opened up the free thinking spirit in religion. They challenged the rationality of gods and sacrificial rites. One of the most important sages in the Upanishads is sage *Yajnabalkya.* Most passages in the early Upanishads are in prose and they are also in Question and Answer form. Some of the best books about Upanishads are written by hume. Dr. S Radhakrishanan. R.D. ranade, Swami chinmay ananda etc.

Some of the questioners in the Upanishads are women named Maitreyi (wife of sage Yajnavalkya) and Gargi (daughter of sage Vachaknu). An ordinary man who reads Upanishads haphazardly will find them confusing and contradictory. But if one goes through the entire Upanishads in a very orderly fashion, then one will understand the actual meanings conveyed by the Upanishads teachings. Now let us briefly go through the trachings of some of the main Upanishads.

Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad (very popularly known among the Western Theologians as the *Great Forest Book*) is one of the earliest and longest Upanishads. One of the greatest teachers of this Upanishad is sage *Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya* said: *You cannot see, the seer of all things; you cannot hear, the hearer of all things; you cannot think, the thinker of all things; you cannot understand, the knower of all things. That which is beyond all comprehension is the self within you.* (III. 4.2)

This Upanishad states about Self again in a different manner as follows :

''When one breathes, one knows him as breath;

When one speaks, one knows him as speech;

When one hears, one knows him as the ear;

When one thinks, one knows him as the mind''

This is the Upanishad, which really dissects all the aspects of the

God. It discusses about multiple gods and finally states that there is only one God and *That is breath.* This Upanishad also explains, God as the *Brahman*—the *Absolute Soul*. It states the *Atman* —the individual soul - is only a reflection of the Brahman. In a dialogue between King Janaka (father of princess Sita) and sage *Yajnavalkya,* the *Light of the Brahman* is explained in a very interesting manner. According to this, everything in the world has Name, Form, and Activity. The Absolute which is the unmanifest is the manifestation of these three aspects.

One of the most popular prayers of Hinduism, comes from this Upanishad and it is as follows.

Lead me from unreal to real

Lead me from darkness to light

Lead me from death to immortality

(*Om Shanti, Om Shanti, Om Shanti*).

When a devotee sings the prayer this line is added to the body of the prayer.

Chandogya Upanishad is another long Upanishad. According to this everything is Brahman. It clearly states that originally there was the Being and the world manifested out of the Being and not out of the Non-Being. This Upanishad argues against the notion of the world coming out of non-being.

The sage *Sandilya* said:

At the time of death, a knower of Brahman should meditate on

Thou art imperishable;

Thou art the change-less reality;

Thom art the source of life.

In verses 3: 14, this Upanishad states: *Verily the whole world is Brahman. Let one worship is as that from which one came forth,* as that into which one will be dissolved, and as that which one breathes.

Katha Upanishad starts with a story. Once upon a time a Brahmin named *Vajasrabasa* was sacrificing everything hoping to get some divine favour. In the midst of his sacrifices, one of his sons *Nachiketas* implored his father to sacrifice him to the God of dath *Yama*. Finally the father sacrificed his beloved son to *Yama*. When the boy reached the abode of the god of death. Yama was perplexed by the act of Nachiketas and asked him to go back to his father. The lively theological conversation that took place between *Nachiketas* and god of death Yama, is what comprises the *Katha Upanishad. Yama* is explaining the ultimate secrets of the universe and the nature of the Brahman in this beautiful Upanishad.

Kena Upanishad says that which cannot be expressed in words by which the tongue speaks — *Know That to be the Brahman.* That which is comprehended by the mind by which the mind comprehends—Know That to be the Brahman. According to this Upanishad *Brahman* is the ultimate factor of the universe. The sense organs work because of the *Brahman.* He who says he knows the Brahman does not know the Brahman. For knowing that is to lose the identity of the knower with the *Brahman.* A devotee who seeks *Brahman* merges with the Brahman, like a pinch of salt which tries to find the bottom of the sea becomes one with the sea. Maybe that is the reason why the Chinese mystic *Lao-Tse* said:

He who knows never tell

He who Tells never knew

Aitareya Upanishad provides an interesting story of creation. The story goes as follows. First there was Atman. It was alone. Then it created waters. Then it wanted to create gods. So then it created a man. For that man a mouth was given. Out the mouth, speech and the God cf fire came out. Then it gave man nostrils and out of nostrils came breath and god of air. Then it gave man eyes and out of eyes came sight and sun-god. Then it gave the man different limbs and out of them many other gods came out. Finally Atman entered the man at the parting of the head and became the "I".

Prasna Upanishad is an interesting dialogue between sage Pippilada and devotess by name Sukesha, Gargya, Kousalya,

Bhargava and Kabandhi. The discussion starts with Kabandhi's question: Sir, how din the creatures come into being?

Mundaka Upanishad differentiats knowledge into higher and lower knowledge. The Higher knowledge is Vedas.

Mandukya Upanishad is the teachings of the sage *Mandukya* on four stages of consciousness which are waking, dreaming, deep sleep (*Sushupti*) and finally *Turiya* state. *Turiya* state alcne is real. Atman can be realized only in the *Turiya state.* Mandukya Upanishad is the smallest of all the 13 principal Upanishads.

Taittiriya Upanishad consists of five different ways of explaining the world. According to this Upanishad, the *Pancha Boothas* or *Pancha Tattwas* or the *Five Elements* by which the entire matter is made of thermselves originated from one another. For example Ether (*Akasha*) is born out of Atman; Air (Vaya) born out of Ether; Fire (*Agni*) born out of Air; Water (*Jala*) born out of Fire; Earth (Prithvi) born out of water.

Shvetashvatara Upanishad is the teachings of the saint *Shvetashvatana.* Unlike others he taught Theism, not the Absolute Brahman. He taught by meditation one can see the God. Max Muller described it as "the most difficult and at the same time one of the most interesting works of its kind." Adi Sankaracharya himself regarded this Upanishad as a direct contrast to his own monastic ideas. This Upanishad starts with a lot of theological questions such as *What is the cause of our birth*? *What sustains our lives*? etc. This Upanishad is very much associated with *Saivism* and sometimes referred to as the *Holy Bible of Saivaites.*

My dear son, please understand that my explanations of a few principal Upanishads are extremely brief and as such you should take time and read several books to get a good grasp of Upanishads.

Rohini (*red*)

1. Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent naksatra; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma). She is the mother of Budha. 2. Goddess of learning. Jain. One of sixteen *vidyadevi* headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Rsabha (*the bull*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). An unusual *avatara* of Visnu. said to be similar to the Jain deity Rsabhanatha and therefore may represent an attempt to meld the two religions by absorbing Jainism locally.

Rudra (*howler*)

Weather god. Hindu (Vedic). An early deity, largely superseded by Siva, who controls the gales and stoms. Often linked with the fire god Agni and the rain god Indra. Generally a malignant god, Rudra lives in the mountains and is deemed to be either tall or dwarf, depending on the severity of the storm. He brings death and disease to man and domestic animals through his 'thousand shafts, and is considered to be highly unpredictable.

Rudracandra

Distinct form of the goddess Durga. Hindu. One of a group of nine *navadurgas*, known as the 'nine durgas'.

Rudracarcika

Mother goddess. Hindu (Puranic). One of the *astamataras*, alternatively a variety of the goddess Durga.

Rudrani

Goddess. Hindu. An epithet of Durga, impersonated by a young pre- menstrual girl in the Durga festivals.

Rukmini (*with gold ornaments*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The daughter of Bhismaka, she is the first consort of Krsna and typically stands to his right. Her son is Kama. She is also an *avatara* of Laksmi. Attribute: lotus. Also Rukmabayi.

Rupini

Minor goddess. Buddhis (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

S

Sacred Plants of Hinduism

Hindus look with respect at the banyan tree, which lives for more than 400 years. They consider the Pipal tree sacred, believing that Brahma resides in its trunk. The Bel tree is associated with the worship of Lord Siva. The small Tulsi plant is the most important of all plants. It is associated with Lord Vishnu, and the leaves are offered to Lord Vishnu in daily worship. The presence of a Tulsi plant or Basil plant is a must in every devoted Hindu's house.

Sadbhuja-Sitatara

God. Buddhist. An emanation of Amoghasiddhi and a variety of Sitatara. Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, blue lotus, bow, image of Amoghasiddhi on crown, lotus and rosary. Three-headed.

Sadhumati (*good*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: white. Attributes: staff, and sword on a blue lotus.

Sagaramati (*mind of the ocean*)

God. Buddhist. A *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Colour: white. Attributes: conch, and sword with staff.

Sakra (*the mighty one*)

God. Buddhist. The god of the month asvina and an epithet of the Vedic god Indra.

Sakti (*energy*)

Personification of a god. Hindu, Jain and buddhist. The effective power, or creative force, of a deity in the form of a female aspect. In a more specitic context, the *Sakti* identifies the creative force of the god Siva, particularly the ugra or violent aspects Durga and Kali. The *Sakti* may frequently have the same characteristics and carry the same attributes as the principal god. In Tantrism, the unity of opposites is defined by the *Sakti*, which is the *yoni* or female sexuallity that unites with the male *lingam* of Siva.

Sakyamuni (*the sage of the Sakyas*)

God. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. The historical *buddha*, known mainly from Tibet. He stands upon a lotus. Colour: golden. Attribute: a bow].

Salagrama

Aniconic form of the god Visnu. Hindu (late). A fossil ammonite shell embodying the god and forming a part of daily ritual in many Vaisnava households as well as appearing in monasteries.

Salagrama, Kumari Pooja Mudra & Nyasa

Salagrama is a smooth stone said to be the natural from (*Swaroopa*) of Lord Vishnu. This smooth stone is found mainly at the bottom of the Gandaki river in Nepal. The stone picked from the river is worshipped as it is without any consecrational ceremony.

Kumari Puja is a ceremony associated with Tantras. In this ceremony a 12-year old girl from a Brahmin family is installed on a *Pita* (a stool) and dressed up like the image of Shakti and worshipped accordingly. This ceremony in mostly conducted in the Sate of Bengal.

Mudra is a very artistic representation of holding the hands and fingers to indicate a particular meaning. Most of the gestures are finger-postures. They are intended to evoke in the mind divine powers as well as to intensify one's concentration. All Hindu deities exhibit some form of *Mudra*. The most important Mudras are: *Yoni Mudra*, *Padma Mudra*, *Gada Mudra*, and *Abhaya Mudra*. *Most Hindu* deities, including Lord Nataraja, show Abhaya Mudra

MUDRAS AND NYASA



YONI MUDRĀ



GADĀ MUDRĀ



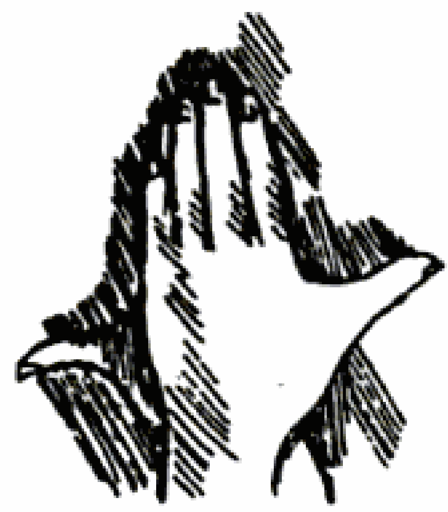
ṠAṄKHA MUDRĀ



TATTVA MUDRĀ



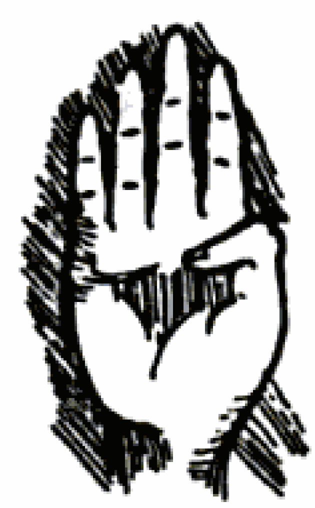
PADMA MUDRĀ



MATSYA MUDRĀ



NYĀSA RITUAL



ABHAYA MUDRĀ

meaning "Fear Not, I will protect you."

The Yoni Mudra is a Shakti Yantra performed to invoke the power of the Goddess in the Sadhaka.

The word 'Nyasa' means "placing or marking" but this is actually a "touching". In this ritual various sensory awareness points of the body are touched by the finger tips and palm of the right hand. By doing so the body is awakened from its dormancy as per Tantras. The most popular *Nyasa* is known as *Sadanga Nyasa.*

Sama

Obscure heroic god. Dravidan (Tamil). [southern India]. Known circa first to fifth century AD. The younger brother of the god of love Kama and equating to Samba, worshipped in nothern India.

Samadhi & Occult Powers

The meaning of Samadhi is (Sam - with, Adhilord) "Union with God". Savikalpa means "having separateness". So in Savikalpa Samadhi the dulality of perception is manintained. The devotee purposefully maintains this separate identity most of the time.

Nirvikalpa Samadhi means "having no separateness". In Nirvikalpa Samadhi duality of perception does not exist at all. In that stage, the devotee becomes one with God.

According to Hinduism, there are four levels of consciousness. They are : 1. waking state; 2. dreaming state; 3. dreamless state or Sushupti; 4. Turiya. The fourth state Turiya is a state above mind and it is the highest level of consiciousness. You may never see the Turiya state mentioned in any modern psychology books. It believed that a realised yogi enters the Turiya state whenever he meditates.

Jivanmukta meansa person who is liberated while living'. Videhamukta means 'a person who is liberated after death, living in soul'. A Jivanmukta lives in the world just like any of us, but he is not attached to this world.

According to Tantras, the body is an assemblage of five Sheaths or Kosha.

They are : 1. Annamaya Kosha (Anna-food, Maya—Made of, Kosha- Sheath; sheath made of food); 2. Pranamaya Kosha (Prana - Vital Energy; vital sheath); 3. Manomaya Kosha (Mano—Mind; mental sheath); 4. Vijnanamaya Kosha (Vijnana — Intellect; intellectual sheath); 5. Anandamaya Kosha (Ananda — Bliss, Maya—Made of, Kosha - Sheath; Sheath of bliss).

The five sheaths (Koshas) of the Self makes the self manifest as Jiva. These are: matter (Prakriti), life (Prana), consciousness (Manas), intelligence (Vijnana) and bliss (Ananda).

Powers like Clairaudience (hearing sounds which the normal human ear cannot hear), Clairvoyance (power of discerning objects not present to the senses), and Telepathy (capability of transferring and receiving thoughts) are some of the Siddhis known to mankind. Even the capability of materializing and dematerializing at will be looked upon as a Siddhi. According to Hinduism, Siddhi is an obstacle in the path of God-realization as it develops unwanted Ego in a devotee. So Hinduism looks down upon Siddhis. But some are born with Siddhis, like Christlike masters and Christ himself. In Jesus Christ and masters like him, Siddhis or occult powers flow out like fragrance out of a rose flower. Christ gave no importance to his powers at all. He did not try to influence public opnion with his Siddhis. In fact he had an aversion for people who came for his occult powers. "Unless you see signs and wonders ye can not believe, go to thy home there thy son liveth" is a symbolic staement of Christ's aversion to Siddhis. All great Hindu saints acted exactly like Jesus Christ.

It is said that some psychic powers of the lower level can be developed by using certain kinds of drugs. But this method of using chemicals to develop Siddhis is the most dangerous method with dire consequences. Again. Hinduism forbids the use of any form of drugs in yoga practices.

According to Hinduism, Siddhis are developed in a human being by the rise of Kundalini power or serpent power through the spinal cord. This Kundlini power resides in Muladhara opposite the sexual organ at the bottom of the spinal cord in every human being. It is believed that as a human being evolves spiritually, this power

rises up slowly and it goes through the five centers (Chakras) in the spinal cord and finally merges in the topmost point in the brain known as Saharara. At that point the person develops Siddhis. So it believed that artificially stimulating that power from its resting point (Muladhara) by chemicals can do serious damage to the body, since the ordinary body is not designed to meet such a tremendous force developed in the body.

Some Mantras (potential chants) like *Pranava* or *Gyatri* can bring about unfoldment of consciousness and there is no limit to such unflodment. These Mantras are the Mantras of the highest order and they develop Siddhis naturally and soowly, so they are always welcome. There are certain Mantras like *Vasikarani Mantra* Which can be used for a specific objective, in this case to attract or win over someone.

Samantabhadra (*all-good*)

God. Buddhist. A form of Vairocana and a *dynanibodhisava* (spiritual meditation *buddha*). he sits on a throne carried by a white elephant. Colour: blue, green or white. Attributes: bell, cup, jewel, lotus with prayer wheel or sword. In Tivet he is also known as Kun-tu-bzan-po. See also Bo Hsian.

Samantaprabha (*possessing universal splendour*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana) One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: red. Attributes: an image of Amitabha carried in the had, and a staff.

Samba

Heroic god. Hindu [northern India]. The son of Krsna and Rukmini, alternatively the son of Visnu. The younger brother of the god Kama and consort of Indukari. Also one of the minor incarnations of Visnu worshipped in the cult of the *pancaviras* by the Vrisni clans.

Samkarsana

Localized form of Balarama. Dravidin (Tamil) [southern India and Sri Lanka]. Has a complexion 'white like milk,' wears a blue robe

with a red garland and carries a *nanjil* (plough).

Sampsa (*sedge*)

Vegetation god. Pre-Christian Finnish. He is perceived as a giver of life to seed which lies dormant through the winter months. His unnamed consort, to whom he is wed in a form of sacred marriage which takes place at sowing time, is also his stepmother.

Samvara (*keeping out*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). One of the emonations of Aksohya and also of Hevajra. In Lamaism he is a four-headed tutelary yi-dam god. His *Sakti* is Vajravaranhi. He stands upon one or more four-armed Hindu deities including Kalaratri and Bhairava. Colour: blue or black. Attributes; axe, bell, cup, drum, of four-faced Brahma, knife, moon disc, shin, staff and trident.

Sandhya

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The daughter of Brahma and consort of Siva or other deities.

San-Dui

Tutelary god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of Lamaist tutelary or *yi-dam* deities chosen on an individual basis as personal guardians. Colour: blue. Attributes; bell, jewel, lotus, prayer wheel, regal trappings, staff and sword. Three-eyed and three-headed.

Sani

1. Astral god. Hindu. The son of Surya and Chaya and the personification of the planet Saturn. Stands upon a lotus or rides in an iron chariot drawn by eight piebald horses. Colour: black or blue. Attributes: arrow, bow, rosary, staff and trident.

2. Astral god. Buddhist. Stands upon a tortoise. Colour: blue-black. Attribute: a staff.

Sanjan (*conscience*)

Goddess. Hindu. The daughter of Tvstar, a consort of Surya and, in some texts, the mother of Yama.

Sankari

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of the *saptamataras.*

Sankha (*pala*)

Snake god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic).

One of a group of seven *mahanagas* or *nagadevas.* Attributes: cup and rosary Three-eyed.

Sannukha (*six-headed*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A form of Skanda and the son of Pasupati and Svaha. God of the month *asadha.* His *Saktis* include Vijaya and Jaya. He holds a large variety of attributes. Also Arumukan.

Santa (*appeased*)

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A Sakti who is one of a group of both *saptamatara* and *astamatara* mothers. Also Camunda.

Santana (*offspring*)

Minor god. Hindu. The son of Ugra and Disa. Also the personification of one of the five of paradise.

Santi (*peace of mind*)

Goddess. Hindu. The consort of Trivikrama.

Santoshi Mata

Mother goddess. Modern Hindu. She first appeared in northern India in 1960 and has since developed a sizeable cult following. She is invoked to assist in gaining personal advancement and prosperity.

Saptamatara

Generic title of a group of mother goddesses. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Seven deities of evil influence, who generally inflict disease or other harm on children. Common colour: red. Attributes:

cup and lotus.

Saraddevi (*goddess of autumn*)

Fertility and vegetation goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Associated with autumn, and an attendant of the goddess Sridevi. Her sacred animal is an antelope. Attributes: cup, knife and peacock feather.

Sarama (*the nimble one*)

Attendant goddess. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). She acts as a messenger to the god Indra and guards his herds. In later Hindu texts Sarama is reputedly the mother of all dogs and is given the epithet the 'bitch of heaven'. The *Rg Veda* accounts her as having punished the minor deity Panis for stealing cows.

Saranyu (*the fleet one*)

Primordial goddess of uncertain affinities. Hindu (Vedic). Saranyu is the daughter of the god Tvastar, and the sister of Visarupa. Her consort is Vivasat, by whom she is said to be the mother of Yama and Yami, the twin progenitors of the human race. Little else is known of her, but she is accounted as having an impetuous nature.

Sarasvati (*flowing water*)

Origin Hindu (Vedic, Epic, and Puranic) [India]. Mother goddess and goddess of wisdom. Later, patron of the arts. *Known period of worship* circa 600 BC, but undoubtedly based on much earlier prehistoric models, until present. *Synonyms* Brahmi; Vagdevi (goddess of speech). Other epithets include Bharati. *Centre (s) of cult* throughout India. *Art references* sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone. Reliefs. *Literary sources Rg Veda* and other Vedic texts; Ramayana epic and Puranic texts.

Sarasvati, as an identifiable personality, may have begun as a Vedic river goddess (the actual river Sarasvati has now disappeared but she may also be linked with the Indus, etc.) In the Vedic capacity her waves are said to smash mountains and her voice is the roar of the torrent. Since her source of strength is the primeval water, she is inexhaustible and she is a bringer of fertility and bountiful harvests. Thus, by inference, she also provides prosperity.

Her presence purifies and, in antiquity, she slew Vrtra, the demonic god of chaos. In her capacity as a Vedic goddess she is invoked on the sacrificial field with the lesser goddesses Ila, Bharati, Mahi and Hotra.

In later Puranic literature Sarasvati (Brahmi) becomes the first consort of the creator goa Brahma (see also Gayatri). Other texts offter her in contention with Laksmi as consort of Visnu. She also became syncretized with the goddess Vac. She is said to have invented Sankrit and is identifed as goddess of wisdom and of the arts. The Vedas are her inspiration and she may be known as the 'mother of the Vedas'. A Hindu festival in her honour is celebrated in early January or late February. She is a patron goddess of students, and books, pencils and pens are offered to her by children before they being classes. Her image often appears on the portals of school gates.

She is generally depicted woth either two or four arms. Colour: white. She may be seated or ride upon a swan or a peacock or a lotus. Attributes include particularly the lute but also arrow, bell, book bow, conch, club, hook, prayer wheel, rosary, water- jar and other items. She may offer a piece of sugar cane or a flower to Brahma. Infrequently three-headed.

Sarasvati, the goddess of learning and knowledge, is the wife of Brahma, the creator of the world. She is represented as an exteremely beautiful woman with milk-white complexion, sitting or standing on water-lily and playing on a lute.

She prpesides over and protects arts and is credited with the invention of writing. On the fifth day of the expanding-moon fortnight during the month of Magh, the worship of this goddess is performed in front of her image or even without her image in front of her vessel in which a pen, an inklstand and a book are placed. These articles are supposed to form a proper substitute for the goddess, who is also named as Vagadini, the deity of elquence. Offerings are placed with flowers on these objects and prayers are chanted from scriptures.

She is also the goddess of speech, the power through which

knowlege expresses itself in action. In the Vedas Saraswati is primarily a river but in the hymns she is celebrated both as a river and a deity. This sacred river, although now dried up, is said in the Rig Veda as "she who goes pure from the mountains as far as the sea." According to Mahabharat, the river was dried up by the curse of the sage Utathya. As a river Saraswati is lauded for the fertilising and purifying powers of her waters and as the giver of fertility and wealth.

Though Rig Veda does not specifically mention her as *Vach*, the goddess of speech, but she is clearly bestowed this status in Mahabharat and Brahmans. Dr. Muir attempts to explain the acquisition of this character by Saraswati in these word, "When once the river Saraswti had acquired the divine character, it was but natural that this river should be regarded as the protector and patron of the rituals and ceremonies accompained by hymns performed at her banks. For this purpose the blessings of Saraswati would have been invoked for their proper and successful performance... This idea must have been further extended to the very composition of these hymns...All this must have resulted in identifying Saraswati with Vach, the goddess of speech ."

On the day consecrated to Saraswati, the musical intruments in the house are cleansed, placed on an altar and devoltly wordhipped as being the abode of this goddess.

Sarvabuddhadharma-Kosavati (*will the virtues of all the buddhas*)

God of literature. Buddhist. The deiftication of texts. One of a group of *dharanis*. Colour: yellow. Attributes: basket of jewels and staff.

Sarvakarmavaranavisdhani (*washing away the obstruction of all deeds*)

God of literature. Buddhist. The deification of texts. One of group of *dharanis*. Colour: green. Attribute: staff.

Sarvanivaranavishkambhin (*Remover of stain*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A *dhyanibodhisattva* or spiritual mediation *buddha*. Colour: white. Attribute: book, jewel, moon

disc, sword and staff.

Sarvapayanjaha (*remover of miseries*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A dhyaniboddhisattva or spiritual mediation buddha. Colour: white, Attribute: hook in two hands. in two hands.

Sarvasokatamonirghatamati (*destroyer of sorrow*)

God. Buddhist. A *dhyanibodhisattva* or spiritual mediation *buddha.*

Sarvastramahajavals (*the great blaze of all weapons*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Sasanadevata

Messenger goddess. Jain [India]. Generic name for one of a group of twenty-four who minister to the *tirthandaras* or saints of Jainism.

Satabhisa

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A malevoent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Satarupa (*with a hundred forms*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Puranic). The daughter of Brahma with whom he committed incest and whose beauty caused him to generate four heads so that he might view her from all directions.

Sati (*truth*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic) [India]. Mother goddess.

Known period of worship circa 400 AD until present.

Synonyms Sakti, Parvati.

Centre (s) of cult none specific. *Art references* sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone.

Literary sources Ramayana and other texis.

Sati is the older incarnation of the benign aspect of the goddess

Sakti. Alternatively she is perceived as an incarnation of Laksmi. According to legend her father was Daksa and her mother Prasuti. She bore sixteen daughters, the youngest of whom was Sati. She is perceived as an ideal Hindu wife and mother who, as a maiden, falls in love with the god Siva. At her choosing-of-a husband ceremony she is distressed that her father has not invited Siva and throws her bridal into the air, whereupon Siva appears in front of her. She becomes the consort of Siva, but the marital association is generally recognized when he is in his form known as Bhava, an epithet meaning 'existence'. Eventually she dies at Daksa's feet from the self-immolating heat of her own purity and zeal. She is reincarnated as Parvati.

The mythology is the basis of the practice of self-sacrifice with came to be known as *sati or suttee*. She is also connected with fire-walking rituals.

Satrughna *(destroyer of foes)*

Minor god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The brother of Laksmana and a half-brother to the god Rama. His mother is Sumitra. He may be depicted holding a fly whisk in each hand. See also Laksmana.

Satyabhama (*with true lustre*)

Goddess. Hindu-Dravidian (Tamil). Known particularly from southern India as the second consort of Krsna, who stands on her left; also as the second consort of Visnu. Attribute: a flower.

Saubhagya-Bhuvanesvari (*buddha of good fortune*)

Goddess of good fortune. Buddhist. A gentle and benevolent deity. colour: red. Attributes: red lotus, and water-jar with jewls.

Savari

Goddess of terrifying appearance. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of *gauris*. Colour: white. Attributes: holding the mountain known as Meru.

Savitar (*impeller*)

Sun god. Hindu (Puranic). The original Vedic list of six descendants of the goddess Aditi or *adityas*, all of whom take the

role of sun gods was, in later times, enlarged to twelve, including Savitar. The god of the rising and setting sun. Colur golden. Attributes: club, prayer wheel and two lotuse.

Science of Reincarnation

Let me repeat to you briefly what Lord Krishna told Arjuna about reincarnation. Lord Krishna said: "At the time of death, the body dies but the sould never dies. The soul passes from one body to another after death like a body changing clothes. The soul goes on taking an endless number of bodies, until the soul exhausts all Karmas, attached to the soul. This process is known as reincarnation." (Gita 2-22).

When the individual soul (Jivatman) exhausts all its Karmas and merges with God—the infinite soul (Paramatman) then we say the individual soul has attained salvation.

If a man exhibits beastly character throughout his life, he well reincarnate as a beast. A glutton may take birth as a pig or other lower forms of life. The Vedas talk about 8.5 million species of life, right from amoeba to human beings and semi-gods. A man can take anyone of these life-forms. Sometimes the soul will also remain in a standstill state for long periods of time without taking any body at all. However, please understand that the soul can get rid of its Karma only if it takes a body. So for attaining salvation, the soul is bound to reincarnate.

Lord Krishna has said that whatever form one thinks of during the time of death, one will attain that form. But at the same time, you know very well that a man who has beastly ideas throughout his life is unlikely to think of God during the time of death. Only God-fearing people can think of God during the time of death; others will think of a multitude of things but not about God.

As I told you before, when a man dies his soul takes with it the sum-total of good and bad Karmas. If the sum-total of his actions is bad, he will go for a worse life-form. So it is the sum-total of Karma that decides the travel route of the soul. One or two bad actions alone do not determine the soul's new destination.

As per the law of Karma, the parents are destined to have sick child to worry about and the child is destined to be born with sickness. But understand, both parents and the child can make life better by new good positive actions.

The most important part of any action is the motive behind it. If the motive is bad, then the best action is piosonous. For example, let us say that you are helping a poor innocent young girl to come up on her life. But it you are doing it with the intention of exploiting her at some future time, then your action is vicious and bod. But if your intentions are strictly humanitarian, then your action is a virtous action indeed. The surgeon and the soldier do diagonally opposite actions. One saves life and other takes it away, but the motives of both actions are very good. So both actions are good.

As per Hinduism such an action will condemn the soul for thousands of years, and be forced to start life all over again from the lowest level of the evolutionary ladder. The soul will have to wait countless years to finally take a human body again. Sometimes, the soul will remain in a standstill condition, becoming a ghost without taking a body, as per the Maha Bhagavatam.

It not only agrees, but goes one step further by saying that the soul of a man can even go back on the ladder of evolution and take the body of an Amoeba.

It may be a mere coincidence, but at the same time, it is very interesting to note that the 10 Avatars of Lord Vishnu are curiously complying with Darwin's theory of evolution. First Lord Vishnu came as *Matsya* (fish - living in water), then came as *Kurma* (tortoise — living in water as well as on land), then came as *Varaha* (boar — living on land only, an animal) then came as Narasimha (man-lion, a combination of man and beast) then came as Vamana (child or dwarf), then came as *Parasurama* (ferocious fighter born to kill the Kshatriyas), then came as *Rama* (a king with all the problems of an ordinary human being), then came as *Krishna* (the super human, in a way the superman beyond any comparison with anyone else,) then came *Buddha* (the silent one, a realised master) and finally still to come as *Kalki* (the destroyer to annihilate creation, so that the process or recreation can be started

all over again). As I said before, this could be a strange coincidence or mythology may have been written based on in-depth knowledge of seers in human reproduction and development of a human being within the womb, where the foetus undergoes timely transformation in tune with Darwin's theory of evolution.

I could answer you that you were an amoeba first and then from that life you slowly evolved by thousands of reincarnations to a human being, but your next question will then be: How did I take birth as an amoeba? I do not want to speculate. No scriptures talk about it. The Bhagavad Gita said: *Creation came out of food, food came out of rains, rains came out of Yajna, Yajna came out of Karmas, Karmas came out of Nature, Nature came out of the Infinite*''. This anser shows the instrumentality of creation. It shows our birth is purely instrumental and our desire for slvation is also purely instrumental. As long and you experience pleasure of pain, you are forced to corect the path you are travelling along and go avove both those experiences. Then you go above those experiences, you are automatically a realised soul. I am sure that if you contemplate on the above question, you will one day find the answer, but once you know the answer, you will be unable to express it in words for anyone else. Remember prince Siddhartha renounced the world to find answers to old age and disease and finally became the Buddha, the silent one. When his devotees questioned him for answers to old age and disease, he told them to follow the eightfold path and that would lead them to Truth and provide all answers.

Please do not hink that even in your wildest dreams: God cannot curse anyone. He is the symbol of love and compassion. As I told you before, God has given us Free Will and our fate is decided by our own actions and our own thoughts. Each moment of our life we are doing things which decide our fate. Our past actions in our last life determine the trajectory of travel of the soul in the present.

So as per the Hindu Low of Karma, people who had none bad Karmas in their past life take birth in bitter conditions in this life. Unluckily, many souls whose past lives' *Karmas* were very bad are born together in the deserts of Ethiopia, bout they are not destined

to suffer for ever. They should on their part help themselves to come out of this terrible condition. We on our part should help them to do so. It is our duty to do everything in our power to wipe out starvation and misery from Ethiopia. By serving them we are actually bettering our own fate for even the best among us may have abundance of past bad Karmas. So remember the words of Christ: "Judge not, taht ye be not judged" (St. Mathew 7-1). The only thing we can do for the poor and the sick is to help them to come out of all miseries, and by doing so, we make our present and future lives better. The Hindu Law of Karma explains all the problems we see in our lives.

I have to admit to you in all honenty that we do not have any corroborative scienticic evidence to prove the sicience or theory of reincarnation. Many books have been written on this subject and some of them narrate stories told by people under hypnotic suggestions.

Unluckily, most of these books are written by zealots who were carried away with the idea of reincarnation. Therefore, I cannot point out to reincarnation. Therefore, I cannot point out to you concrete evidence, but at the same time, I want to say that there is a mystery regarding death and reincarnation and unless and until someone proves to the world that reincarnation science is false this age-old scientific idea is here to stay. Please tell me, are there better theories to explain the problems in the world than the law of Karma and the science of reincarnation? There are even statements in the Bible, pointing out the science of reincarnation. Christ said, "But I say unto you that Elias has come already, and they knew him not." (Mathew 17-12); "Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them John the Baptist." (Mathew 17-13). Through those lines Christ is declaring to the world that the beheaded John the Baptist was the reincarnation of Elias. As a proof of existence of the soul, Christ said, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."

Sesa (naga) (*remainder*)

Snake god or *naga*. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The great serpent lying in the primeval sea and encircling the world. The son

of Kasyapa and Kadru. A many-headed attendant on Visnu who uses the snake as couch on which to rest between cycles of the universe. Its many hoods overshadow and protect him. Not technically a deity but important enough in literature to be included here. Also Adisesa; Ananta.

Seyon (*the red one*)

Creator god. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India and Sri Lanka]. An early deity associated particularly with hilly regions in parts of southern India and thought to live in trees. Also Muruga.

Shadanana-Subrahmanya

Form of the god Karttikeya. Hindu (Puranic). The form possesses six heads and twelve arms. According to legend, the six heads arose because the fire god Agni had an adulterous relationship with the six consorts of the risis (astral gods) who all needed to suckle the offspring. Like Karttikeya, he is usually depicted riding on a peacock.

Shanee

Shanee or Saturn, is a god of whom the superstitious and orthodox Hindus are very much afraid. In all big cities his image made of iron painted in black with four arms and a protruding red- coloured tongue, can be seen placed in many street corners. People can be seen dropping coins before it, pouring oil over it and paying homage to it it. It is done to appease this god so that he may not harm the worshipper.

According to Jyotish Tatva "if a person be born under the planet Shanee, he will be slandered, his riches dissipated, his peace destroyed and his family harmed". People in general are very much afraid of this god's displeasure, which if aroused shall lead to endless sufferings.

It is a common belief that when Shanee is in the ninth stellar mansion, the most dreadful events befall mankind. When Lord Ram broke the bow of Shiv in the Court of King Janak prior to his marriage with Sita, the earth sank in many places. The waters of the seven seas was inturmoil. Parsuram, very startled at the noise,

immediately exclaimed, "Ah! Someone has laid hold of the hood of Shesh Nag, the king of snakes, or fallen under the ninth of Shanee". When Ram found that his wife Sita had been stolen by somebody, he in anger exclaimed that "the person who did that must have been born when Shance was in the ninth mansion".

The vehicle of this god is shown as a crow, a specially unlucky bird. Shanee was the son of Surya and Chhaya while another account says that he was born of Bal Ram and Revati. He is also named as Krur-Drashti (the evil eved one)

Toward off the evil influence of this god on a person, special prayers are prescribed and rituals suggested.

It is said that the sure antidote of Saturn or Shanee's sevil effect is the worship of Lord Hanuman. Scriptures say that when Saturn warned Lord Hanuman about his onset of the Seven and Half Years (Saade Saati), the Monkey Lord accepted the challenge and allowed Saturn to have his play. When the planet dwelled on Lord Hanuman's head, the Monkey Lord 'headed' heavy rocks so viciously that the planet was almost crushed. Similar agony he faced when he tried to dwell on the Monkey Lord's body and legs. Then the tried to dwell on the Monkey Lord's body and legs. Then the planet had to bow before the Lord, saying that whosoever worshipped Lord Hanuman shall be beyond the evil effect of the planet.

Shen-Rab

Supreme god. Bon (pre-Lamaist) [Tibet]. In the ancient religion he is the remote and barely defined creator deity.

Shesh Nag

Shesh Nag (the serpent god) comprises an important part of Hindu mythology. As the reclining couch and the roofing canopy of the god Vishnu, it has been a god venerated by all and worshipped by many for centuries.

It is considered to be the king of the serpent race and the ruler of the infernal regions called *Patal.* God Vishnu sleeps over the bed of its coils during intervals of creation. Shesh Nag is also

represented as one supporting the world on its hood.

The Nags have three Kings, Vaasuki, Takshak and Shesh. Shesh is said to represent the 'remainder' when the universe is destroyed and the power of creation (Lord vishnu) rests on its colis. The Nags are dwelling in an underworld, called Nag Loke, which is an immense domain crowded with palaces, houses, towers and pleasure gardens. According to Varah Puran, three of the lower worlds, Patal, Atal and Sutal belong to the Nags. Their favourite places of visitations are the banks of river, Ikshumati, the Naimish forest on the shores of the Gomati, the northern banks of the Ganga and the Nishad land. They also dwell under the sea.

These nags are not always the enemy of man and they even intermarry with them. Arjun of Mahabharat married a Nag girl named Uloopi. Shesh Nag is the serpent with a thousand heads and is also called 'Anant', the timeless, because it does not die with destruction of the universe.

All serpents are of divine extraction, because they are the children of Kadru, who herself is the descendant of Kashyap. The main city of Nags is Bhogvati (the city of pleasures), where Shesh appears like the white mountain adorned with gems. The later Purans identify Shesh even with Krishna as Vishnu. Shesh is said to be the soul of Krishna's brother Balram. Thus Shesh emerged from the body of dying Balram and entered the earth, where he was warmly welcomed by all other sepents.

Siddhi (*accomplishment, success*)

Minor goddess of good fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A deity who grants favours. Sometimes associated with the elephant god Ganesha or Maha-Ganapati, on whose knee she may sit. In earlier times she was described as a consort of Bhaga.

Sikhandin (*with a tuft of hair*)

Minor deity. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of emancipated *vidyesvaras* (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva. Attributes: knife and sword.

Sikhin

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted amongst one of a series of medicine *buddhas* or *sMan-bla*. Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes. Colour: yellowish red.

Note: The term also defines the symbolic use of fire.

Silaparamita (*perfection of character*)

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. Spiritual offspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: white. Attributes: floral prayer wheel and jewelled staff.

Sinhanada (*lion's roar*)

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. A variety of Avalokitesvara. Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes and attended by a lion. Colour: white. Attributes: cup, fly whilk, image of the Amitabha on the crown, lotus, moon disc, rosary, skin, snake, sword and trident. Three-eyed. Also accounted amongst one of a series of medicine *buddhas* or *sMan-bla*.

Sinivali

Minor goddess of prosperity. Hindu (Vedic). Associated specifically with the boon of children. The mistress of the nuclear family. She is depicted as a matronly lady.

Sita (*furrow*)

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic). [India]. Chthonic or earth goddess.

Known period of worship circa 300 BC and earlier through to present day times.

Synonyms an *avatara* of Laksmi. *Centre (s) of cult* none specific.

Art references sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone.

Literary sources Ramayana of Valmiki and later Puranic literature.

In Vedic mythology Sita is strictly an earth deity, born from a furrow and associated with ploughing and ploughed fields. She appears as the consort of the rain gods Indra and Parjanya. She

usually stands to the right of Rama. In later times, effectively from 200 AD onwards. Sita (see also Radha) is the consort of Rama, one of the major reincarnations of the god Visnu, though she is generally eclipsed by the goddess Laksmi with whom she is seen as a separate aspect.

Legend gives Sita an unhappy life, though she epitomizes the perfect Hindu wife. Early in her marriage to Rama she is abducted by the foreign god Ravana, who carries her off to Lanka [Sri Lanka], where he imprisons her in a garden. Maintaining total fidelity to her husband, she returns to him inviolate, but he is sceptical of her purity and rejects her. Eventually, when she has threatened to immolate herself through the inner fire of her purity, Rama grudgingly has her back, though only briefly. His doubts return and, pregnant, she is banished to exile where she gives birth to twin sons. Rama's rejection finally takes its toll. Sita begs her mother, the earth, for salvation, whereupon a golden throne rises from the ground. She takes her place on it and descends forever whilst Rama is left eternally to mourn his loss. Attributes: blue lotus and a single braid of hair.

Sitala(mata) (*possibly meaning mother cold*).

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of seven *Saktis* who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent, inflicting sickness. Particularly known from Bengal where she may be identified with the goddes Kali. Usually standing naked upon a lotus or riding an ass. Alternatively symbolized by a stone on which a face is painted Attribute: water-jar.

Sitapatra (*with a white umbrella*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Vairocana and a female *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Colour: Attributes: arrow, bow, hook, noose, parasol, prayer wheel and white staff. Sometimes three-eyed and three-headed.

Sitatara (the white Tara')

Goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Of mild disposition, she is regarded as one of the forms of the goddess Tara and an emanation

of Amoghasiddhi or Vairocana. In later times she became identified as a female variety of Avalokitesvara-Padmapani. By tradition she is the incarnation of a Chinese princess. Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, blue or white lotus, bow, image of Amoghasiddhi, jewle, moon disc and rosary. Three-or seven-eyed.

Siva or Shiv or Shiva (*the destroyer*)

Origin Hindu [India]. Principal creative and destructive god.

Known period of worship circa 300 BC. and probably earlier as Rudra. until present.

Syonyms accredited with more than a thousand epithets in Hindu writings (see also Bhairava, Khandoba).

Centre (s) of cult Benares, etc.

An references sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone; reliefs.

Litterary sources Ramayana epic and Puranic texts.

Siva is a deity with the linked roles of both creator and destroyer of life, more generally the latter. He personifies the inexorable passage of time and out of destruction he creates new life. He may have evolved from the Vedic storm god Rudra, though he is now thought to be an older pre-Indo-European deity whose attributes appear on seals from the Indus Valley civilization. His consort, or more precisely his female aspect, is Sakti, but he is also closely linked with the terrible Kali and the goddess Sati.

He is generally depicted in the role of an ascetic with a blue-painted throat, attributed to holding the primal poison *halahala* in his throat before swallowing it to save mankind from its deadly effect. His sacred animal is the bull Nandi. He bears four arms (less commonly two) which hold a variety of attributes including a bow, a club to which is fastened a skull, a drum (*damaru*), representing the rhythm of creation, and a noose. He has a strong association with fire and may hold a ball of flame—the destructive corollary to creation. His symbol is the *linga* (phallus), often accompanied by the female *yoni* and these objects in stone may form the focus of worship.

The Saivite sect envisage Siva as creator, preserver and destroyer and he is manifest in three aspects of his own divine power. As the ascetic, represented by the Yogi, he is in this destructive aspect. His consorts are Kali and durga. He destroys without emotion. The *Yogi* is naked, smeared with ashes and with matted hair, sitting under a banyan tree holding a beggar's bowl. As the 'lord of the dance', Nataraja, Siva's steps follow the rhythm of the universal forces. He dances dances in a circle of fire, treading upon the dwarfish figure who is the personification of ignorance (see also Vamana). In this aspect he can be drawn as a jolly figure, a drinker of wine and a hunter. As the *linga,* the form of Siva which devotees generally worship, he is the symbol of creative powers. In his cosmic capacity he appears as Nataraja.

Legend has it that Siva lives in Kailas, a place byond the Himalaya. The Lingayats, a particular Saivite sect founded in the twelfth century AD, may carry a small stone *linga* mounted in a silver box and worn round the neck or arm. Chiefly centred on southern India, sancturaies to Siva are often home to *devalasis,* troupes of dancing girls who also serve as cultic prostitutes. Siva also enjoys popular worship as a domestic delity. See also Pancanana.

Shiv meaning 'the Good' God is the third member of the triad. He is also named as Mahesh or Mahadev (the Greatest God). He is much more many-sided and multi-colourful than many of the other gods including Vishnu.

Shiv is represented in various ways but the distinctive characteristics of this god are (1) his seat, which is invariably either the skin of a tiger or a panther, (2) a number of cobras all around his neck and shoulders, (3) his long matted hair tied into a mop atop his head, (4) the crescent that he wears on the mop of his hair, (5) the sacred river Ganga falling upon his head and lowing by his side, (6) the trident (trishula), the symbol of his power, (7) the sacred bull, and (8) the mendicant's bowl.

Besides these symbols another very important physical characteristic of Shiva is his vertical third eye. In the Mahabharata, the Great Hindu epic, the legend of how Shiva got the third eye is narrated this way. One day his beautiful consort Parvati, daughter

of the King of Mountains, stealthily went behind Shiv and playfully placed her hands over his eyes. Suddenly darkness engulfed the whole world and all beings trembled in great fear as the lord of the universe had closed his eyes. Suddenly a massive tongue of flame leapt from the forehead of Shiv; a third eye had appeared there and this gave light to the world.

In "Sri Shiv Tattva" this eye is described as 'the frontal eye, the eye of fire, it is the eye of higher perception. It looks mainly inward but whenever directed outward, it burns all that appears before it. It is from a glance of the third eye that Kam, the lord of lust, was burnt to ashes and that the gods and all created beings are destroyed at each of the periodical destructions of the universe.' Having three eyes, Shiva is also called Tri-netra, Iri-ambaka, Tri-aksha or Tri-nayana.

About the different symobls surrounding Lord Shiv, the scriptures gives various explanations.

(a) *The tiger skin*: The tiger is the vehicle of Shakti, the goddess of all power and force. Shiv is beyond and above any kind of force. He is its master and carries the skin of the tiger as the victor of every foce. An interesting legend in Purans narrates that once Shiv wandred in the forests in the form of a bare-bodied mendicant and the wives of the sages were enchanted by his figure. The jealous sages in anger tried to over-power him by digging a pit. When Shiv passed by that pit, a tiger was made to rush out of it. Shiv slew that tiger and taking its skin wore it as a garment.

(b) *Cobras around neck*: Shiv is beyond the power of death though he is sourrounded and encircled by death. This aspect is also emphasised by his name Neelkanth, the god who alone can drink the deadly poison to free the world from its effects. Now these cobras around his neck also represent the basic dormant energy, which in cobra-like maner is coiled at the base of the spinal cord. It is called kundalini, the serpent power.

(c) *Matted hair*: The flowing *Jata* of Shiv's matted hair represents him as the lord of wind, Vayu, who is the subtle form of the breath all round.

(d) *Crescent on hair-mop*: He bears on his head as a diadem the cresescent of the fifth day moon. Placed near the fiery thied eye this shows the power of Soma, the sacrificial offering, which is the representiative of Moon. It means that Shiv possesses the power of procreation co-existent with that of destruction.

(e) *Sacred Ganga*: The holiest of the holy rivers, namely Ganga, flowing from the crown of Shiv's head represents the causal waters, from which the earth arises. It also represents the essential instrument of ritual purification. Holding the Ganges on his head, Shiv allowed the outlet to the great holy river so as to traverse the earth and bring purifying water to the human beings.

(f) *The Trident:* Trishul of Shiva is the symbol of the three functions of the Creator, the Preserver and the Destroyer. This also represents the instrument of punishment to the evil doer on all the three planes, Viz., spiritual, subtle and physical.

In popular representations Shiv stands majestically in the centre of the universe, adorned with all his symbols of crescent, cobras, prayer beads, trident and matted hair. Very often a female figure-head adons his head; she is goddess Ganga who was brought from heavens by Bhagirath and as earth could not bear Ganga's impact, she was taken by Shiv on his own head.

At other times Shiv is shown as riding on his bull, called Nandi, covered with ashes all over his body, his eyes inflamed with intoxicating herbs as and with a drum and a horn in his two hands. Here the ashes on the body symbolise him as á Yogi, who has burnt all his evil desires and rubbed himself with the ashes of the ritual fire.

Shiv's bull, Nandi (the joyful) is white as snow with a huge body and soft brown eyes. Its hump resembles the top of a snow-covered mountain. Bull represents lust or the sexual impulse and Shiv is the master of lust fully controlling it by riding on its back.

Another well-known name of Shiv is Rudra. In the Vedas Rudra is called by many names and has many attributes. He is the roaring god, the terrible god, the god of storms, the god of tempest. On the one hand if angry he can bring disaster to man and his wealth of

cattle but if pleased he can be kind and beneficient. In Yajurveda Rudra is also called 'Mahadeva', a name specifically applied today only to Shiv. According to Vishnu Puran this god Rudra is said to have sprung from the forehead of Brahma and to have separated himself into male and female. This legend is the forerunner of Shiv's another manifestation, called Ardh Narishwar, where he is half-male and half-female, combining energies of both the sexes. There Rudra is also given seven other names by Brahma: Bhava, Sarva, Ishan, Pashupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadev. These names are all being given to Shiv. Finally Rudra of the Vedas ceased to have any separate identity and became completely merged into Shiv.

Shiv represents the complete cyclic process of generation destruction and regeneration. The all-embracing nature of this god is reflected in 1008 names given to him in scriptures and in the mind of numerous Hindus he is recognised as being essentially no different from the Vedic notion of the multiple forms of a single divine power.

Shiv is also called by the well-known name of Nataraj, the lord of the cosmic dance. Numerous images of Shiv in his dancing pose are available throughout India and this image of Shiv is also the most popular one amongst the foreigners. The small drum of Lord Shiv is the symbol of rhythm and sound. In fact rhythm is there in the whole movement of the universe and sound is the medium, musical and divine, that comes from the word of Supreme Deity, and carries revelations and the tuth. Sound with atmospheric either also represents the primeval outburst of creation.

Shiv's name Shankar1 means the Giver of Joy, and other name Shambhu means the Abode of Joy. As Maheshwar he is the Divine Lord, the source of Knowledge. In Maheshwar are co-ordinated the three energies from which knowledge flows, the power of understanding (*Jnana*), the will (*Iccha*) and action (*Kriya*). Shiv is Mahakal, which means not only the Lord of Death but much more correctly the Lord of Time Before anything could come to exist, time has to be present. In fact time is the first condition for the existence of the world. It is prior to space.

The image of Ardh-Narishwar, half-male and half-female, represents Lord Shiv as the union of substance and energy, the life principle ans shakti.

Shiv's another well-known name is Yogi Raj, i.e., the Lord of Yoga. He is himself represented as the perfect or the greatest ascetic. He is the last word in austeity, penance and meditation. This method of Yoga is different from rituals and therefore in some earlier Hindu scriptures, Shiv is accused of teaching the secrets of higher truths to those who are low-born or who are not properly qualified for ritual practices. To Lord Shiv is attributed revealing to mankind the method and technique of Yoga, which is these days so very popular in the West.

This god in many images is shown to have five faces-looking towards East, West, North and South while the fifth one is shown looking upward. The five aspects represented by these five faces are: (1) The face looking upward is called Ishana (the Ruler), and is copper-coloured. He is the embodiment of all forms of learning and represents the enjoyer of nature (*Kshtrajan*). (2) The eastern face of Shiv is called Tat-Purusha (the Supreme Man) and is yellow-coloured. It represents all nature connected with earth, the sense of smell and the anus as the organ of action. (3) The western face of Shiv is red and is called Vam Deva (the Lefthand Deity), it represents Ego (*Ahamkara*) and corresponds to the element fire. It is connected with the sense of sight. (4) The southern face of Shiv is blue or sometimes blue-black, it is called Aghora Bhairav (the Non-fearful or the Frightful), it represents Intellect (Buddhi) and Eternal Laws (Dharma). It is connected with the sense of hearing and the organ of speech. (5) The northern face of Shiv is called Sadyojat (the suddenly born) and is white in colour. It represents the mind and corresponds to sacrificial elixir (Soma).

Amongst the above five faces the southern face of Shiv, called Aghora-Bhairav needs a brief introduction on its own. As indicated above, Bhairav means 'Frightful', 'Terrible'. Lord Shiv, after the death of his first wife named 'Sati' could not be consoled. He wandered over the earth aimlessly carrying the corpse of his consort on his shoulders. To bring Shiv to his normal state and to

cure him of this obsession Vishnu used his Sudarshan Chakra and cut up Sati's body scattering her limbs at various spots. The places where the limbs fell became sacred spots and are known as Shaktipiths. Each of these spots is guarded by Shiv in the form of Bhairav. Bhairav is seen either in the company of a dog or riding a dog. Bhairav is invoked in rites designed to destroy enemies.

Another most popular image of Shiv has no human form but is represented by Ling (Phallus Figure). It is made of black or white stone, depicted sometimes as 'rounded both at top and botton to show that it does not stand' or 'arise from' anywhere in our space or time, and in some cases an egg-shaped stone tapering at top recalling either the 'Cosmic Egg', from which the world emerge or the 'Bright Flame of Light'; hence it is called Jyotir Ling too. Thus whether depicted as the generative symbol or the fountain-source of light, this Ling represents the Lord of the Universe.

It may also be noted that sex symbolism is for long associated with farming and the implements connected with it. This fertility aspect of the Ling belongs to the period of Epics and Purans. As the symbol of transcendental energy and power Ling is the central conception of Shiv philosophy. Shiv is represented in temples in beautifully sculptured forms as well as the symbolic Ling form. Amongst the Lingayat sect followers, the initiation ceremony corresponding to the scred thread ceremony of most of the Hindus is performed by replacing Yajnopavita (the sacred thread) with a necklace of small *lings.* In south India a formalised miniatureling, attached to anecklace and concealed under the clothing, is also worn by male devotees of Shiv.

In fact, the phallus aspect has been overdone by western scholars though *Ling's* first meaning is that of a 'sign', 'mark' or 'symbol'. Shiv-Puran, the source book of Shiv's divinity, itself defines ling as "The distinctive sign through which it is possible to recognise the nature of the object" Thus Ling, the phallus, giver of life is the important shape under which the nature of the shapeless can be represented. Again Shiv-Puran in another hymn says: "It is not the Ling itself which is worshipped but the owner of the Ling, the Progenitor, the Supreme Creator (Purushottam), the Ling leads to

Shiv, whose symbol it is". The Shiv-Ling is represented erect and is divided into three parts. The lowest part is below the pedestal, and is called brahma part. The middle or the second part is on the pedestal and is womb-shaped: It is called the Vishnu part. The third part is cylindrical and rises above the pedestal; this is the Rudra-Shiv part.

Shiv-Ratri, i.e., Shiv's Night is the famous festival in honour of Lord Shiv. It is held on the fourteenth night of the dark half moon in the month of Magh (January-February). Throughout the night Shiv's image is covered by showers of green leaves. This custom is based on a legend that narrates how a hunter after his game in a thick forest lost the way and decided to spend the night under a tree. He could not sleep properly due to cold and feeling uneasy kept on changing postures. With his movements the leaves kept on falling below, where a Shiv-Ling stood at the foot of the tree. Lord was so pleased with him that he bestowed upon him good fortunes. Hence the custom of holding this night- festival, named Shiva-Ratri.

Sin in Hinduism

Except in mythology, in no other scriptures are there any references to Sin. Hinduism very scientifically deals with sin, explaining the Law of Karma, of Cause and Effect. All the parables in mythology explain how to deal with sins in a very positive manner. When the child puts his hand in fire, he gest burnt. His action here is *due to ignorance of the power of fire*. The child did not commit a sin, but due to ignorance of the truth that fire burns, he did a bad Karma and he had the result of getting burnt. Hinduism looks at all actions in the manner of the example quoted above. We all sin or do bad Karmas due to ignorance. Ignorance is the root cause of all evils. Knowledge eradicates ignorance. That is the way the idea of sin is explained in Hinduism. Christainity has stressed sin and fear of God and Hell. Hinduism, as I said before, stands against the doctrine of sin. Swami Ramakrishna Paramahamsa always looked down upon the western idea that human beings are sinners. The Bhagavad Gita says: "Even if thou art the worst of sinners, thou shalt cross the ocean of sin by the bark of wisdom." (Bhagavad

Gita Chap. 4-36). Adi Sankaracharya, in his doctrine or Advaita, looks at ignorance as Maya or Illusion and time and again had written that Knowledge is the only answer for all human problems. Hinduism forbids guilty consciousness in any form.

The scriptures state that, "Even God cannot save a man who goes under self-pity and guilty consciousness."

An advanced Yogi will look at a devotee, prostitute and a murderer alike, because he knows that we are all part of an evolutionary process. Some are far ahead and going very fast towards God and some are at the starting gate and going at a snail's pace to God. Some are divine in form and some are in the mental state of beasts, even though they have human forms.

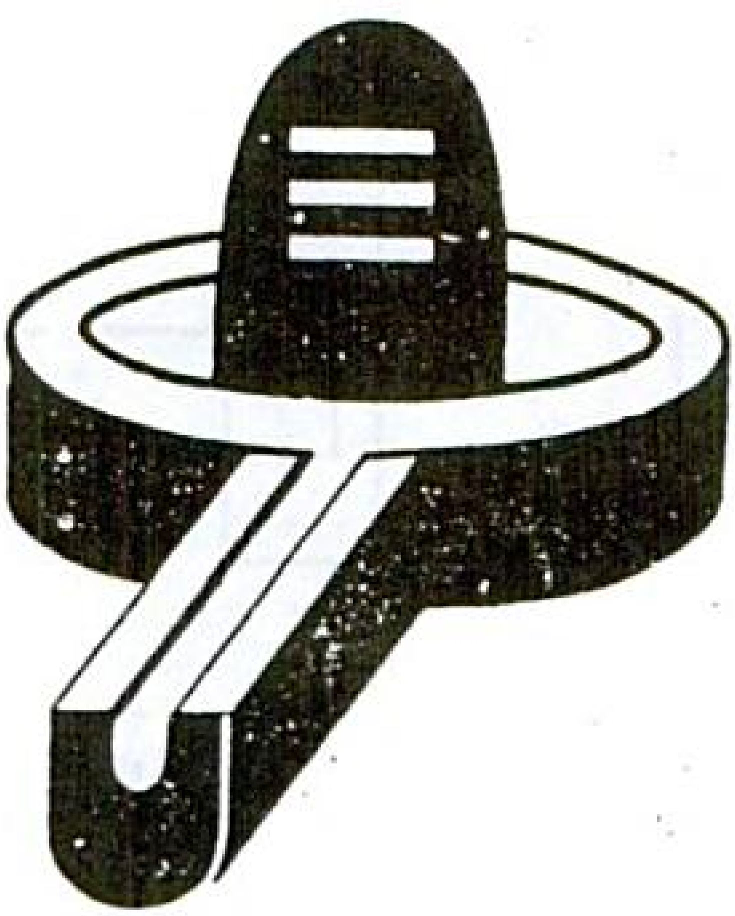
The Bhagavad Gita states. "Yoga—Union with the Divine-is for all." So we all will achieve salvation one day. Only the *time factor* differs from one individaual to another. God has given us free will, so that we can decide when to reach God. Some experiment with their lives and take millions of years to reach God, and some mentally comprehend the Truth and reach God very fast by following the methods discovered by Christlike masters called Rishis. So to the Hindu who believes in the truth, "Salvation is for all', the words "Sin and Sinner" do not mean much at all.

Sivalinga, Yantra and Mandala

Siva Linga is a part of Tantrism. Today, you will never see a Hindu temple without Siva Linga standing in a Yoni. According to the Siva Purana it represents the space in which the universe creates and annihilates itself again and again. As per sTantras, it represents the phallus and yoni-a representation of male and female attributes of God. It also represents the creative principle of life.

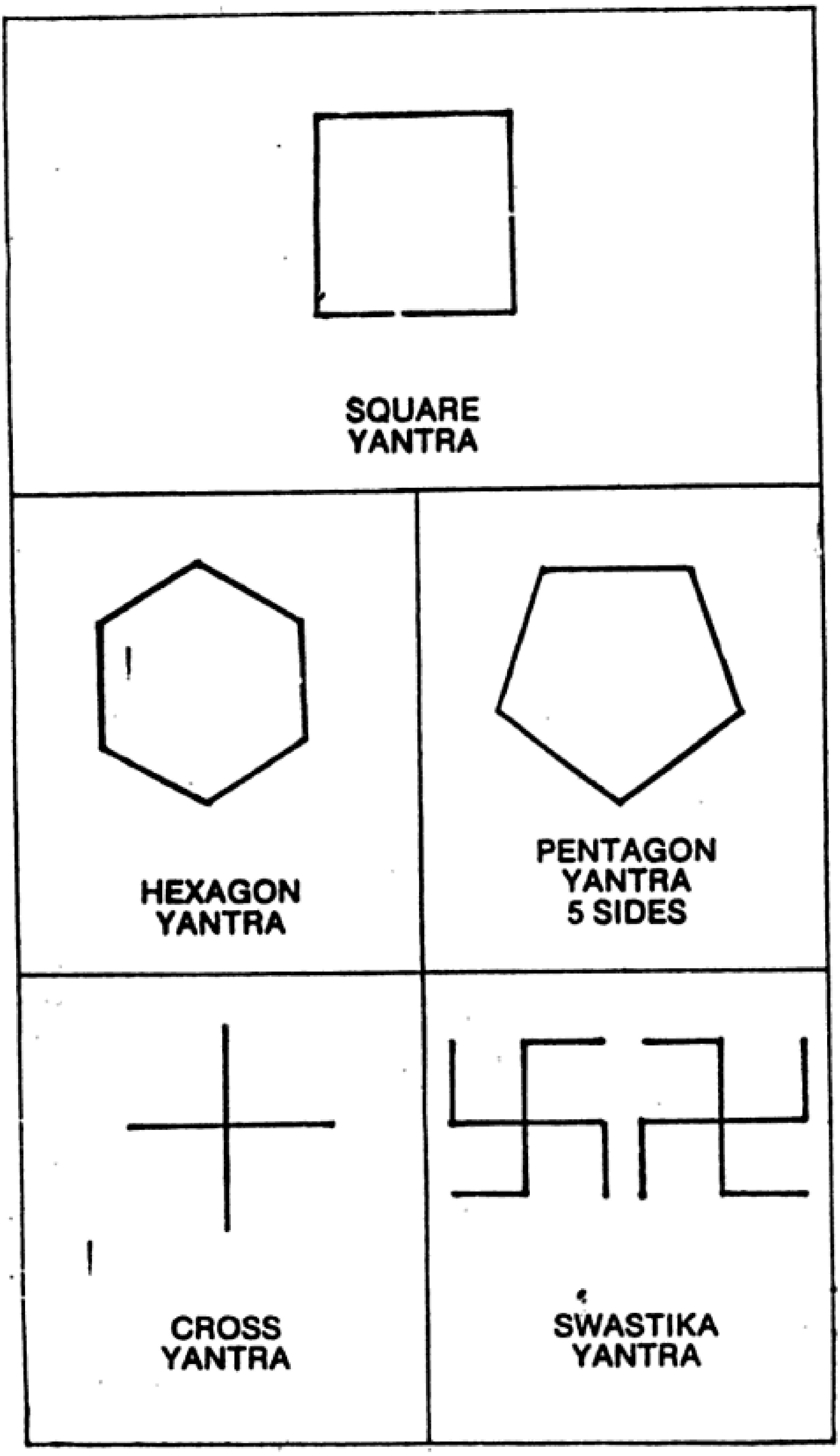
A Yantra is a geometrical figure like a dot (Bindu) or an inverted triangle in its simplest form. There are very complicated figures, symmetrical and non symmetrical, under the name Yantras. All these figures are based on certain mathematical forms and certain methods. Yantras represent deities like Siva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Krishna and especially Mother Goddess Shakti. Mantra and Tantra are very much interconnected. Thought is expressed in subtle form

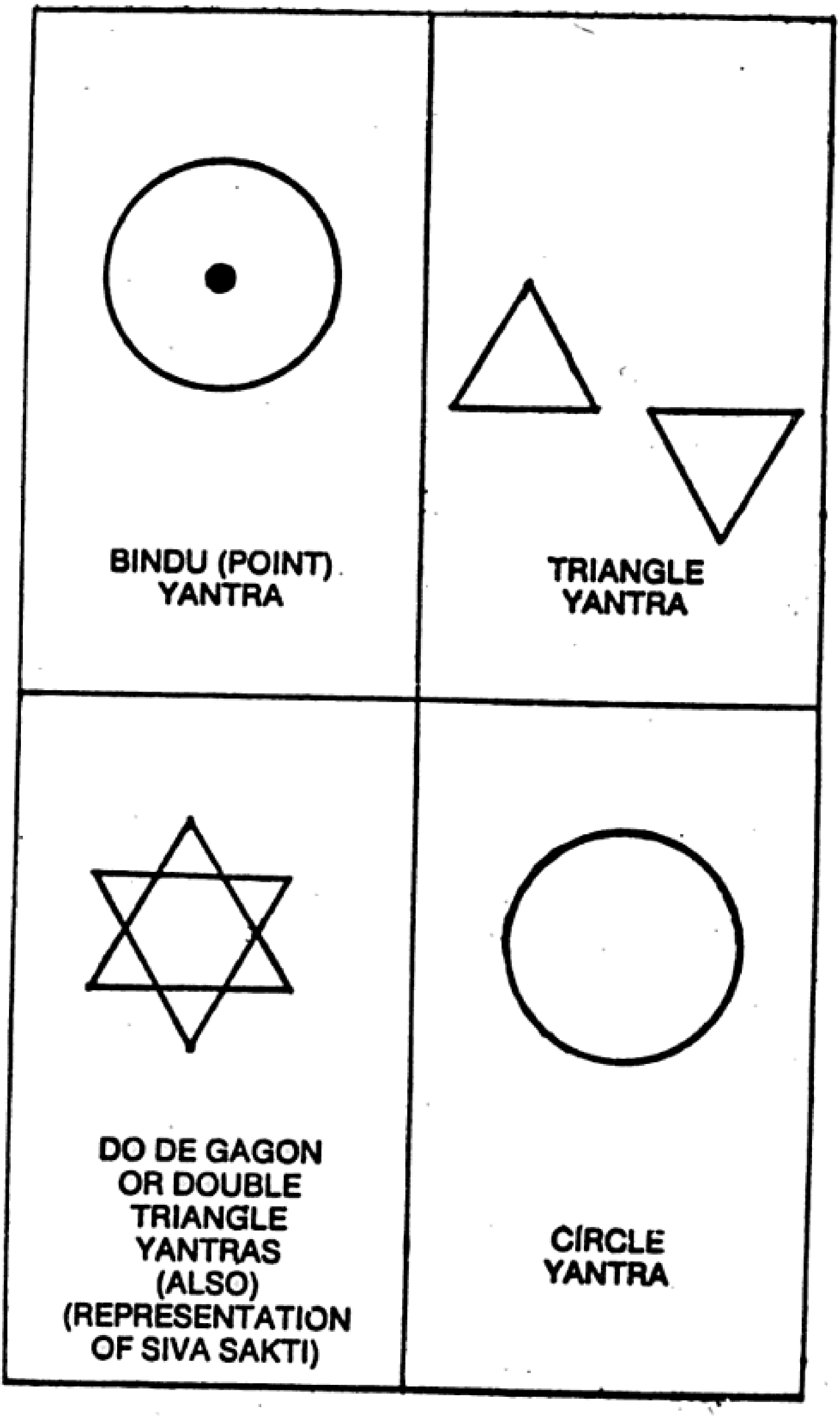




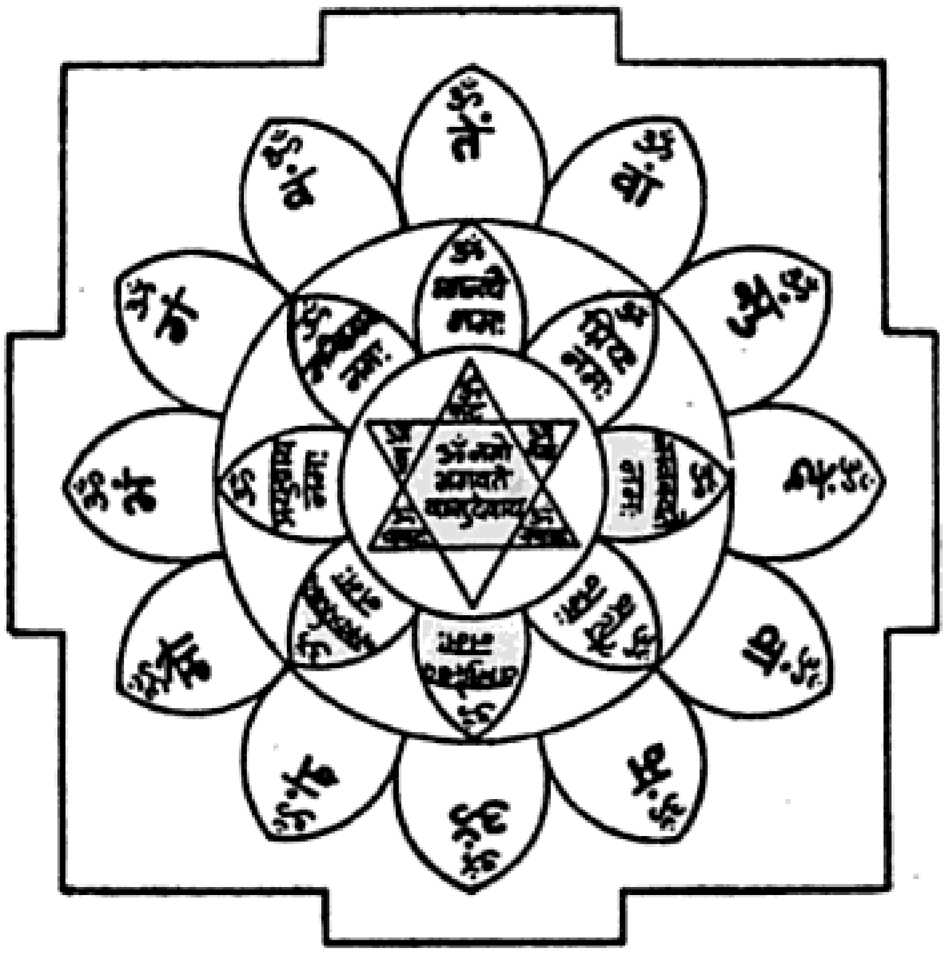
SIVA LINGA

SIMPLE YANTRAS

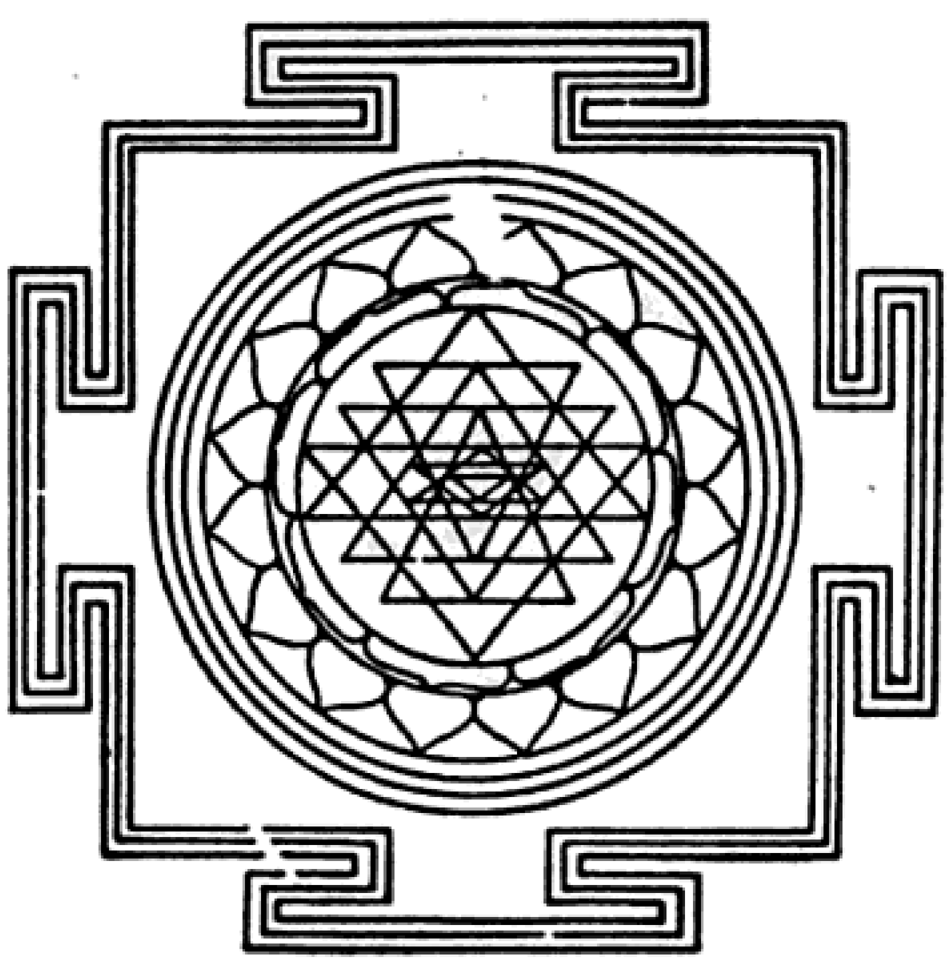



BINDU (POINT)
YANTRA
TRIANGLE
YANTRA
DO DE GAGON
OR DOUBLE
TRIANGLE
YANTRAS
(ALSO)
(REPRESENTATION
OF SIVA SAKTI)
CIRCLE
YANTRA

COMPLEX YANTRAS



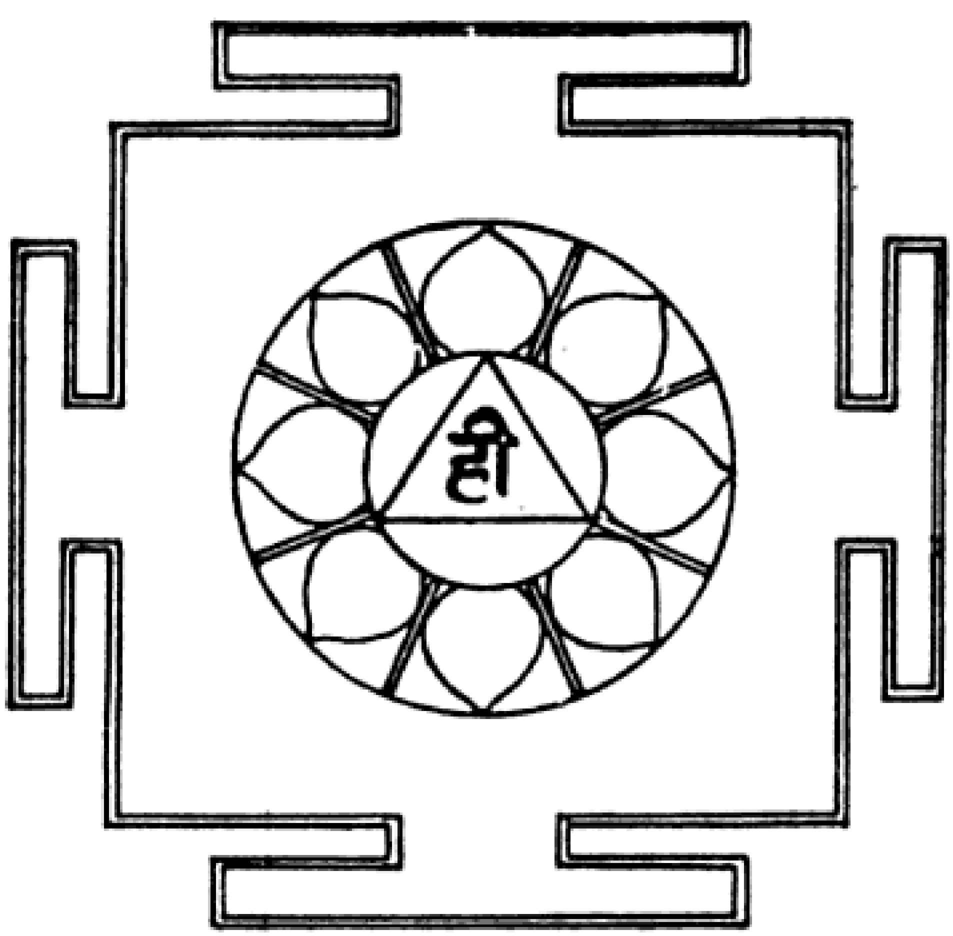
THE VISHNU YANTRA



SRI YANTRA



THE GANAPATI YANTRA



THE MAHANIRVANA YANTRA

as a Mantra and the same thought is expressed in pictorial form as a Yantra. Believe it or not, there are more than 900 Yantras. One of the most important Yantra is Sri yantra, or Navayoni Chakra, representing both Siva and Shakti. You will see this Yantra exhibited in Shakti temples.

Mandala means a "circle". It is actually the most complicated form of *Yantra.* It comes in all shapes and it is very artistic in nature. In Hinduism *Mandalas* are used a aids to meditation. The beauty of Hindu temples lies in the number of *Mandalas* carved on the stones of the temple walls. A Mandala consists of a center and lines and circles placed geometrically around the centre. The center usually is a dot (Bindu).

You can see Mandalas even in Buddhist viharas. Behind each Mandala there are volumes of thoughts. Sometimes looking at a Mandala is like looking through a kaleidoscope.

Sivottama (*highest Siva*)

Minor god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic) One of a group of emancipated vidyeśvaras (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva

Skanda

Origin Hindu (Epic and Puranic). [India]. God of war.

Known period of worship circa 300 BC or earlier until present.

Synonyms Kumara: Karttikeya;

Subrahmanya; many other minor epithets

Centre (s) of cult various.

Art references sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone.

Literary sources Ramayana and *Mahabharata* epics; Puranic texts.

Regarded as the leader of the divine army of gods. One of the sons of Siva, his birth is accounted in bizarre fashion. The gods persuaded Siva and Parvati to curb their incessant love-making. The vast quantity of unused semen then had to be disposed of. After shuttling it between fire (Agni) and water (Ganges), Brahma

placed it on the mountain of the rising sun where, after ten millennia, it became Skanda.

His consorts include Kaumari (Devasena) and Valli, and his sons are Sakha, Visakha and Naigameya. Perceived as virile and youthful, his name may signify the emission of semen. He is also seen as 'one who jumps' whilst fighting and his sacred animals include the peacock and the cockerel, the latter being both aggressive and a jumper. Attributes: banner, cockerel, hatchet, peacock feather and staff. He may also carry a wider assortment of objects and weapons. As Kartikeya he is often depicted bearing six heads and twelve arms.

Smrti

Minor god. Buddhist (Mahayana).

Sodasi (*girl of sixteen*)

Minor goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of *mahavidyas* personifying the *Sakti* is Siva. Aspects include Divyaratri.

Soma (*essence*)

Minor god. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The deification of the sacred yellow drink soma. Also the consort of Surya. Regarded in later Hinduism as the dikpala of the northern direction and as one of a group of vasu deities answering to the god Indra. Attributes: hook, lotus and prayer wheel, See also Candra.

Somaskanda

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Aspect of the god Siva. Of uncertain origin, but possibly rpresenting a composite trio of Siva with his consort Uma (Parvati) and his son Skanda (as a boy), Four-armed. Attributes of Siva: axe, corpse and hatchet. Attribute of Uma: lotus. Attributes of Skanda: book, head-dress, mango fruit and ornament.

Sravistha

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Sri (devi) (prosperity)

1. Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). An early name which was syncretized with that of Laksmi to form Sri-Laksmi 2. Goddess. Buddhist-Lamasist [Tibet]. One of a group of *dharmapala* with terible appearance and royal attire who protect the Dalai Lama. A manifestation of the goddess Devi sometimes seen in company with Visnu, when conventionally she stands on his right. Her breasts are covered by a narrow band of cloth. She may be invoked to provide wealth (see also Laksmi). Her retnue includes the goddesses of the seasons and her animal is a mule. Colour: blue. Attributes: chiefly cup and staff but on occasion several other objects including a pink lotus. Three-eyed and may be three-headed. Also Lha Mo. 3. Goddess. Jain.

Srikantha (*beautiful throat*)

Minor deity. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of emancipated *vidyesvaras* (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva, in this instance referring to his darkish blue neck. Also one of the *ekadasarudras* of eleven forms of Rudra. Attributes: hatchet and trident.

Srivasumukhi (*excellent-faced*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Vasudhara.

Srivasundhara (*earth*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Vasudhara.

Srividyadevi (*of excellent knowledge*)

Minor goddess. Hindu. A deity of terrifying appearance. Attributes: necklace of bones, teeth,

Sruti and Smriti Literature

The Hindu scriptures can be broadly classifed into two groups. One is *Sruti* (that which is heard) literature and the other is Smriti (that which is remembered) literature. Both these literature are considered as 'revelations of God' just like all Biblical literature are considered 'God-inspired literature. are considered 'God-inspired literature.' Both Sruti and Smriti literature are

further divided as shown in the next page.

The foremost sacred books of Hinduism are known as the Vedas, which mean 'knowledge.' There are four Vedas and they claim to teach a man the highest truths that can lead him to God. The first three Vedas are known as Triple Vedas.

1. *Rig Veda* - (Veda of Hymns) 1028 hymns (10 books) to gods like Indra and Agni.

2. *Yajur Veda* - (Veda of Liturgy) knowledge of rites. This Veda is based on Rig-Veda. It contains the rituals explaining 'How to perform' all rituals. It consists of prose and verse. This Veda is indeed a priestly handbook, even describing the rules and regulations of how to make an altar. Sacrifice is one of the most important parts of this Veda.

3. *Sama Veda* - (Veada of Music) knowledge of chants. Sama means melody.. The classical Indian music originated from Sama *Veda.* This Veda consists of 1549 stanzas. This Veda also is based on Rig Veda and stanzas from *Sama.*

Hindu Scriptures

Smriti Literature		Sruti Literature
	Manu Smriti, Gautama Smriti Yainavalkya Smriti	Vedas
1. Vedangas	Dharma Sutras, Astronomy, Astrology, Grammar, Rituals	Rig Veda Classical Same Veda Music
2. Darsanas	Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Samkhya yoga, Mimamsa, Vedanta, Advaita, Dvaita	Yajur Veda Atharva Veda
3. Ithihasas	Ramayana Mahabharata Bhagavad Gita (Hindu Bible)	Samhita Brahmanas
4. Puranas	20 total Angi, Bhagavata, Bhavishya, Brahma, Brahmanda, Brahmavaivarta, Garuda, Matsya, Narada, Padma, Skanda, Siva, Vamana, Varaha, Vayu, Vishnu	Aranyakas & upanishads Isa Kena Katha
5. Upavedas	Material Added to Vedas - Ayurveda	Prasna

	added to Atharva Veda	Mundaka
6. Tantras	Mantras, Yantras, Mandalas, Cosmograms, Mudras, Kundlini Power, Sexo-Yogic Exercises	Mandukya Aitareya
7. Agamas	Sectarian Vaishnava Agamas, Saiva Agamas, Shakti Agamas (Vishnu Samhita)	Taittiriya Chandogya Brihad-Aranyaka
8. Upangas	Logical & Ritualistic Forms of Thought	Kaushitaki Shvetashvatara Maitri

These are the major subdivisions. Of course, there is still a lot of literature in Hinduism. Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Gitagovindam by Swami Jaya Deva (Devotional), Yoga Vashishtha, Kama Sutra by Saint Vatsyayana. Panchatatra are some of them.

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2. *Brahmanas* - direction for performance of rituals

3. *Aranyakas* - contain Mantras and interpretations of rituals.

4. *Upanishads* - A number of texts revealing the ultimate spiritual truths and various suggestions of ways to realize them. The word *Upanishad* is composed of *Upa* (near) *Ni* (down) and *Shad* (to sit). An Upanishad is a teaching taught by the Guru so that nobody overhears the teachings.

There are more than 108 books of Upanishads.

The 13 most impotant Upanishads are :

Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitarega, Taittireya, Chandogya, Brihad-Aranyaka, Keushitaki, Shvetasvatara and Maitri. Some of the Upanishads are named after the great sages who were featured in them. Those sages are Mandukya, Shvetasvatara, Kaushitaki and Maitri. Other Upanishads are named after the first word of the work.

We also have 11 minor Yogic Upanishads. The most important among them are *Yoga Tattva, Dhyana Bindu,* and the *Nada Bindu. Yoga Tattva* consists of all the details about yogic practices. Nada *Bindu* as the name depicts deals with the auditory phenomena that accomapany certain yogic exercises. *Dhyana Bindu* deals with

syllable Aum and with many mystic revelations.

Stanitakumara

God jain [India]. One of the deities grouped under the general title of *bhavanavasi* (dwelling in places). Of youthful appearance.

Status of Women in Hinduism

Actually, all Hindus, especially those who belong to the Brahmin caste, are supposed to wear a dot on their foreheads. It is supposed to be at the centre of the meeting point of the two eyes to protect that important point. That important point is known as the "Spiritual eye" or "third eye" or Ajna Chakra. There is a lot of discussion about this center in books relating to Kundalini Power (Tantric literature). These dots are made of herbal (turmeric) powder or sandalwood paste.

Only a person who meditates on this point is supposed to see light. Hindius believe that Jesus Christ was referring to this point when he said, "If therefore thine eye be single, thy body is full of light." (Mathew 6-22). In India, Vaishnavites put this dot in an elongated form, starting from the centre between the eyes and going to the topmost point on the head, known as Sahasrara, to smoothen and protect the whole path of the flow of Kundalini power, which I have explained before. Anyway, in India as time went on, women kept up the system of wearing dots and a red dot of herbal powders meant that the woman is a respectably married lady. Widows are not supposed to wear a red dot. No particular attributes can be given to this system today. Some women even go for different colours of paint to match the colour or the sarees they wear!

Women are kept on a pedestal in Hinduism but at the same time their freedom is curtailed for the sake of protection. In the Code of Manu, it is stated that a woman should be protected by her father during her childhood, by her husband during her youth, and by her son during her old age. Manu also asked society to worship woman, because she is the "light of the house". Hinduism believes that a woman who devotes her entire life to the well-being of her husband is a *Pativrata* and she is endowed with numerous powers, usually attained by Sages.

In Hinduism, Saraswati is the Goddess of Knowledge, Lakshmi is the Goddess of Wealth, and Parvati is the Goddess of Power. At the same time, they are the consorts of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva respectively. The Mother God comes before the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. So in mythology and in Sruti literature, women are held in very high esteem. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, one of the persons asking grilling questions to Sage Yajnavalkya is none other than a female saint named Gargi. The Saka Agamas or Tantras glorify the supreme as the Mother of the Universe under one of the names and forms of Devi. In Tantras, the female aspirant is looked upon as an embodiment of Shakti and she is worshipped through rituals like Kumari Pooja (virgin worship) and *Shakti* Upasana (Goddess worship).

Subhadra (*very splendid*)

Goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The daughter of Vasudeva and sister of Krsna. She may appear standing beside Jagganath.

Subhaga

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Subhamekhala (*with a marvellous girdle*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahaymana). An attendant of Buddhakepala.

Subrahmanya

Minor warrior deity. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A form of Karttikeya which is depicted with six heads and twelve arms. Also Shadanana-Subrahmanya; see also Skanda.

Suddhodana (*having pure rice*)

Primordial god. Buddhist. The father of the Buddha. The deified king of the Sakya tribe from which the Buddha descended; his consort is Mayadevi.

Sudurjaya (*very difficult to conquer*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified

bhumis recognized as different spiritual spheres through which a disciple passes. Colour: yellow. Attributes: emerald and staff.

Sugriva (*beautiful strong neck*)

Monkey god. Hindu. The son of the sun god and leader of the monkey army which, according to epic tradition supported Rama.

Sukarasya (*face of a sow*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist.

Sukla-Tara

Goddess. Buddhist (*Mahayana*). Considered to be an emanation of all the *dhyanibuddhas* (meditation *buddhas*), but also regarded as being indistinguishable from the 'white Tara' (see also Tara). Colour: white.

Sukra (*bright*)

Astral god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The personification of the planet Venus and the tutor of the demons. He may, on occasion, be represented as female, owing to the fact that he was once made to swallow his attendant Kaca and then restore him to life. Colour: white. Rides in a golden or silver chariot drawn by eight or ten horses. Attributes: book, prayer wheel, purse, staff, treasure and water-jar.

Suksma (*very small*)

Minor deity. Hindu (epic and Puranic). One of a group of emancipated *vidyesvaras* (lords of knowledge) considered to be aspects of Siva. Attributes; hatchet and trident.

Sulini

Minor goddess. Hindu. Of terrible appearance. Animal: lion. Attribut: trident.

Sumati (*very wise*)

Deification of literature. Buddhist. One of a group of dharanis. Colour: yellow. Attributes: ear of rice and staff.

Sumbha

Goddess. Buddhist. A female *dikpala* or gurardian of the nadir direction (her male counterpart is Sumbharagj). Colour: blue. Attribute: snake noose.

Sumbharaja

God. Buddhist. A dikpala or guardian of the nadir direction. Colour; blue.

Attributes: jewel, lotus, staff and sword. Three-headed.

Sundara (*charming*)

1. Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). A prosperous aspect of the god Siva.

2. Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mathayana).

An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Suparikirtitanamasri (*Lord with a celebrated name*)

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamais [Tibet Accounted amongst a series of medicine *buddhas* or *sMan-bla.* Typically with stretched ear- lobes. Colour: yellow.

Suparnakumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groops under the general title of *bhvanavasi* (dwelling in places). Of youthful appearance.

Sura (wine)

Goddess of wine. Hindu. She is considered to be of terrible appearance and has no consort. Three-eyed.

Suraksini

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Surangama (*bright coloured*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). A *bodhisattva* or *b. 'dha*-designate. Colour: white. Attribute: sword.

Suresvara (*lord of the gods*)

God. Hind (Epic and Puranic). One of the eleven *ekadasarudras* or Rudra gods. Attributes: arrow, axe, bell, bow, bowl, club, drum, hook, iron rod, lotus, prayer whell and trident.

Survarnabhadravimalaratnaprab hasa (*the bright, pure jewel splendour*)

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted as one of a series of medicine *buddhas* or *sMan-bla.* Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes. Colour: yellowish white.

Surya (1)

Origin Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic) [India]. Sun god.

Known period of worship circa 1700 BC until present.

Synonyms Diskara (day-maker);

Grahapati (king of planets); Surya Narayana.

Centre(s) of cult the 'Black Pagoda' shrine at Konorak in Orissa; also throughout India.

Art references sculptures from circa 600 AD, including erotic reliefs a the 'Black Pagoda', usually in bronze, less frequently is stone.

Literary sources Rg Veda and other Vedic texts, Epic and Puranic texts.

In the *Vedas* Surya is a prominent figure, not only the personification of the sun in the heavens and of cosmic order, but also a source of infinite knowledge. Considered to have been introduced from Iran, he is head of the *aditya* group of sun deities. He is the son of Dyaus and Aditi and his consorts include Laksmi, Chaya and Sanjna. His children include Manu, Revanta, Yama and Yamuna, and a sun goddess also called surya.

Surya is depicted either standing or seated, sometimes driving a one-wheeled chariot drawn across the sky by up to seven horses. He bears four arms. In northern India he is usually found wearing knee-length boots. In the south he goes barefoot. Attributes: band,

club, conch, knife, two totuses, prayer wheel, staff with lion, trident and war drum. May be three-eyed.

Surya (2)

Sun goddess. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). The daughter of the sun god Surya. According to legend she was courted by all the gods, but won finally by the twin Asvin gods woth whom she rides in a chariot. Other legends account her consorts to include Soma and Pusan. She is the essence of the cosmos. Also Svitr.

Surya (*The sun*)

In ancient India during Vedic age and even afterwards Surya has played a very significant role in Hindu mythology and amongst Hindu gods.

Surya is one of the three chief gods of the Vedas. As one of the spheres, the physical sun is the celestial form of fire, Agni, and source of all life Surya is at the centre of the spheres. Above it are the unmanifest spheres of the Supreme Ruler and below it are the manifest spheres of the moon and the earth.

The other name of Surya is Savitri which means brilliance. In the later ages; like other many Vedic gods, this god became more or less a mythical figure superseded by Vishnu, who came to be regarded by Hindus as the supreme manifestiation of the self-Existent-the Superme God.

Still the most celebrated mantra (hymn), known as Gayatree Mantra, is the incarntation addressed to Surya. Also many of the forms of meditation, prayers and rituals used in the daily ceremonies of Hindu Brahmins are meant to be addressed to this god. Daily in the morning one can see hundreds of Hindus offereing water to the rising sun, accompanied with incarnations. Women can be seen frequently taking a pledge that in case Surya bestows them with a son, they would be regularly performing such and such ceremony to worship this god. A legend states that about three hundred years ago a learned Hindu, who was suffering from leprosy, prayed to Surya for cure. He was inspired to write eight verses in Sanskrit, known as Suryashtak, to please the god, and by

the time he had finished the last verse he was restored to health. Worship of the god Surya is performed standing in the sun with clasped hands and closed eyes. The origin of this method of obtaining relief from sickness is ascribed to Shambu, the son of Krishna, who was directed in a dream to repeat twice a day the twenty-one names of Surya standing in this manner.

Surya ha two wives, Suvarna and Chhaya. The first one is the daughter of Vishwakarma. After her marriage she found that she could not bear the power of this god's rays. She, therefore, made an image of her own, imparted life to it and left it with Surya. Later on she was turned into a mare and adopted by Surya again.

The abode of this god is called as Surya Loka. A powerful race of Hindu kings has always taken pride in calling itself as the direct descendant of Surya. In this dynasty of Surya Vanshis the first King had been Ikshwakoo while god ram was the sixty sixth king in this lineage. Even till medieval ages and thereafter so many Rajput kings connected their family with Surya.

Surya has several sons. The law giver, Manu, the lord of death, Yama and the river Yamuna were born of Suvarna. According to Mahabharat, the great warrior Karan was this god's illegitimate son by Kunti, the mother of Pandavas. Surya is also the father of the monkey chief, Sugreev, who was the ally of Lord Ram.

Chiandogya Upanishad says that at the time of creation the world's egg divided itself into two parts, the one of silver and the other of gold. The silver part became the earth, the golden part the sky. The outer cover of the egg became the mountains; the inner cover the clouds and snow; the inside veins became the rivers and the liquid in the egg became the ocean. When the sun appeared there was a great cry from which all the beings and all their pleasures were born. Hence at his rising and setting, cries and songs are heard; all beings and desires rise toward it. Those who worship the sun as the Absolute ever hear beautiful sounds and are filled with joy.

The well-known horses of Surya are mentioned in Rig Veda, which says "May Surya with its seven horses arrive". The sun sits on a lotus in his chariot of seven golden mares. Sometimes the chariot

has only one horse with seven heads surrounded with rays. Surya's charioteer is Aruna (the red one), who is the wise elder brother of Garuda, the vehicle of Vishnu, and is also the deity of dawn. He stands on the chariot in front of the Sun, and his strong and vast body shelters the world from Surya's fury.

He is worshipped by various names like Procreator (Savitar), Lord-of-the-Day (Aharpati), Eye-of-the-World (Jagat Chakshu), Witness-of Deeds (Karma Sakshin) or Lord-or-Seven Horses (Saptashva).

Though small images or visual representations of this god can be seen in bit temples of other gods, Surya has only one full- fledged temple dedicated to it. It is the famous temple of Sun God at Konarak in Orissa. The structural peculiarity of this shrine is that it is built mainly of blocks of laterite without the use of mortar. The blocks are all held together by a system of poise and balance–a masterpiece of the science of architecture. In this temple the weight of the one stone acts against the pressure of another, much of the stability being a matter a balance and equilibrium. The temple was ouilt in the thirteenth century A.D. but seems to have been later abandoned for some unkown reasons.

The Solar Eclipse and also the Lunar Eclipse have also their interesting mythological explanation After the Great Churning of the Sea, when the gods and demons began to fight for nectar, Lord Vishnu adopted the form of an enchanting lady, Mohini, and began to pour nectar down the throat of the gods. One of the demons saw through this game of Vishnu and mingled with the gods adopting their guise. Then the moon-god and the sun-god pointed at the demon's cunningness and Vishnu hacked off his head by his disc Sudarshan. But by that time the demon had the nectar in his throat. So, despite the hacking off his head, his head and the trunk remained independently alive and came to be known as the Dragon's Head or Rahu and the Dragon's Tail or Ketu respectively. At the time of the eclipse Rahu is said to swallow the moon and Ketu, the sun out of their constant animosity.

Svadha (*invoked with offerings*)

Minor goddess. Hindu. The daughter of Daksa and Prasuti. Sometimes identified as a consort of Rudra or Agni.

Svaraghosaraja

Physician god. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Accounted amongst a serties of medicine *buddhas or sMan-bla.* Typically depicted with stretched ear-lobes. Colour: yellowish red.

Svasthavesini (*entering a natural state*)

Goddess. Hindu. One of terrifying appearance. Colour: scarlet. Attribute: drum. Three-eyed and three-headed.

Svati

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma). Also Nistya.

Swastika & Hinduism

The symbol Swastika (luck or well-being in Sanskrity) is a symbol of Aryan culture or Hinduism. It is an auspicious symbol for Hindus, Buddhists and Jains. It has been found on Byzantine buildings, Celtic monuments and on Greek coins. It is even found in some American Indian burial grounds in the U.S.A.

The figure Swastika is in the form of a Greek cross with ends of the arms bent at right angles. The right-handed Swastika moves in clock-wise direction and the left-handed Swastika moves in a counter-clockwise direction. *This symbol creates an impression of perpetual motion.* The right-handed (clock-wise) Swastika is considered a solar symbol or a fire symbol. The Hindus and Jains draw Swastika marks on books, doors, offerings etc. The lefthanded Swastika sometimes is considered an evil omen.

Usually all Swastikas are white on a black background, but during the Nazi regime, a black lefthanded, titled Swastika or "Hakenkreuz" became the characteristic emblem of the Nazi party. Anyway, today Swastika is the most hated symbol in the world. Nobody can say for sure whether it was the risuse of Hindu

Swastika's power that caused the "Rise and fall of Adolf Hitler."

Syamatara *(the 'black Tara')*

Goddess. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. A gracious form of the goddess Tara. Also an emanation of Amoghasiddhi and a form of Avalokitesvara. Colour: black, possibly green. Attribute: blue lotus.

T

Taditakara (*lightning*)

Goddess of light. Buddhist. Colour: green Attributes: lightning in the form of a creeper. Also Vidyddhara.

Takkiraja

God. Buddhist. A *ḍikpala* or guardian of the south-eastern quarter. Colour : blue. Attributes: blue staff, jewel, lotus staff, sword and trident. Also Vajrajvalanalarka and Vajrayaksa.

Taksaka

Snake god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of seven *mahanagas*. Attributes: rosary, swastika and water-jar.

Tantras, Chakras and Kundalini Power

The Tantras are a branch of Hinduism. Most Tantra literature is still kept a secret and the real meaning of much that is known is still an enigma. Most Hindus, including great scholars, generally do not discus Tantra.

The Sanskrit word Tantra means "to expand". Unlike the rest of Hinduism, a part of Tantra believes in the enjoyment of material life. No one knows exactly when Tantrism started or the saints who started it. Evidence shows that Tantrism existed during the Vedic age. Even Sankara mentions its existence in his book Saundarya Lahari. There are about 108 books on Tantras. Tantrism and *Shaktism* are almost one and the same. In Tantrism, the deity is *Siva-Shakti*, a combination of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati. It is a system of practices used for spiritual upliftment. The best part

of Tantrism is its knowledge about the vast untapped energy in the human body. This power is known as Kundalini power or Serpent power. Tantrism also researched into alchemy (chemistry), astrology, astronomy, palmistry. cosmology and even in atomic theory. Mantras are the gift of Tantras to Hinduism and the world. Yantras, the geometrical figures and sketches associated with Mantras, are also equally important gifts of Tantrism to humanity.

As per Tantras, the three important nerves Sushumna, Ida and Pingala start from Muladhara Chakra, the base of spinal column. Sushumna is the most important of all nerves or Nadis and is invisible and subtle. It runs through the central channel of the spinal column and extends to the topmost point of the head. Ida and Pingala run parallel to Sushumna on the left and right side of the spinal coloumn respectively. Ida and Pindgala nerves or Nadis meet Sushumna at Ajna Chakra, the point situated between the eyebrows. They then separate again and flow through the left and right nostrils respectively.

Along Sushumna, there are seven psychic centres starting with Muladhara Chakra. They cannot be seen with naked eyes. They are believed to look like lotus flowers with different colours and each controls a sense organ's activity.

Muladhara Chakra—base of spine — 4 petals — controls Smell

Svadishthana Chakra — base of genitals-6 petals — Taste

Manipura Chakra—opposite to navel-10 petals -Sight

Anahata Chakra — at the level of heart — 12 petals — Touch

Visuddha Chakra — at medulla oblongata — 16 petals — Hearing

Ajna Chakra — between eyebrows — 2 petals — controls Mind

Sahasrara — located above the topmost point of head has 1,000 petals — Yogi attains cosmic consciousness.

Daddy: According to Tantric literature, there is a very mysterious and powerful force in the human body called Kundalin Power or Serpent Power. It is lying like a Serpent in a coiled or inactive form at the base of the spine called *Muladhara Chakra.* (The three

important nerves of the human body, *Sushumna, Ida* and *Pingala* also originate from the same point.) As per Tantras, since this mighty force remains dormant throughout one's life- time, most people are unaware of its existence. It is believed that as a person evolves spiritually by meditation or Pranayama exercises, this power slowly rises up through the Sushumna nerve. This rise of Kundalini power is known as Awakening of Kundalini.

This power riscs slowly and steadily and does not shoot up in a straight line. When it passes through each paychic centre, the person will have complete control of one of the sense-organs. For example, if it reaches Manipura Chakra opposite to the navel, the person wil have complete control of sight. No Samadhi (Sam=with; Adhi=Lord. — Union with God) is possible without the awakening of this power. It is said, the Kun dalini power passes along the six chakras and eventually gest united with Sahasrara at the crown of the head. When that happens the person attains cosmic consciousness, the highest form of realization.

Why Hindus donot discuss Tantrism.

The only reason for it I can think of is due to the erotic nature of some parts of the Tantra literature. Unhappily Tantras also deal with black magic and sexo-yogic exercises between male and female devotees. As per Tantrism such an act will help both devotess to explore their senses rather than be subdued by them and actually make use of their sexual energy for spiritual uplift. The woman devotee who takes part in these erotic exercises is considered as Shakti (Mother Goddess).

Apart form with I have discussed above, in a particular kind of Tantric practice, devotees follow the Five M's. They are Madya (wine) Mamsa (meat), Matsya (fish), Mudra (Parched rice) and *Maithuna* (sexual union). During the performance of certain Tantric rituals, devotees even resort to the use of drugs and chemicals.

All these practices are against the basic fundamentals of Hinduism. Now, you know exactly the reason why many Hindu scholars do not want to discuss Tantras. At the same time, anyone will wonder

why a scripture which gave us the knowledge of Kundalini power in the body, Mantras and Yantras resorts to wine and sex.

Tara (*power of hunger*)

1. Gooddess. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic). May originally have had astral connotations, since the word can be interpreted as 'star'. One of a group of *mahavidyas* personifying the *Sakti* of Siva. She may also be the consort of Candra (Soma). Aspects include Krodharatri. Attributes: knife, skin, skull, snakes and sword. Three-eyed.

2. Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana and Vajrayana). An epithet of the mother of the Buddha, Maya. Also one of a series of female deities, the *dhyanibuddhaskti* considered to be aspects of the *Sakti* of Avalokitesvara or of Amogashiddhi. She may also be the *Sakit* of Adibiddha and of the various *dhyanibuddhas*, in which case she is characterized by their colours. These Taras thus become 'White Tara and as on. See also Bhrkuti, Ekajata, Kurukulla, Sitatara and Syamatara. In Tibetan Buddhism she is known as sGrol-ma.

Tathatavasita (*control of the such-ness*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One a group of vasitas personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: white. Attribute: whit lotus.

Tejosnisa (*sharp*)

God. Buddhist. Apparently connected with the guardian deities connected with the guardian dities or dikpalas in the south- eastern quarter. Colour whitish red. Attribute: sun disc.

Thirukural — Holy Bible of Saivaites

It is indeed a great Hindu scripture but it is unknown to Hindus in general since this scripture, unlike others, is written in Tamil language. It is indeed a part of Dravidian civilization of South India. Thirukurat can be considered as the Holy Bible of *Saivaites* (people who worship Lord Siva — the Lord of Annihilation) and it was written by a weaver named Thiruvalluvar during the first century B.C. In Tamil language, Tiru means *Holy* and *Kural* means voice. This scripture consists of short couplets. In fact, the entire

scripture consists of 133 chapters and each chapter consists of 10 couplets. So totally there are 1330 couplets in this sacred literature. Even though Thirukural is considered to be the Holy Bible of Saivaites, the scripture itself is universal in nature. It teaches a man the values of life. In a way it is an enlarged version of *Ten Commandments.* Almost all who come across with this scripture will fall in love with it, due to its simplicity and universality of expression of facts. Followers of Jainism love to read this, because this scripture exemplifies the ideals of *Ahimsa* or non-violence. The Christians of South India like to read it, since many things written in this scripture are similar to the *Sermon* on the *Mount.* The late *Dr. Albert Schweitzer* called it: One of the grandest achievements of the human mind. I hope you will definitely read this lovable scripture.

Tiksnosnisa (*hot and sharp*)

God. Buddhist. Apparently connected with the guardian deities or *dikpalas* in the north-western quarter. Colour: sky green (possibly meaning 'overcast') Attributes: book and sword.

Tirth Yatra

Tirth literally means "crossing place" or a "ford" and *Yatra* means "travel" or "pillgrimage". The ford in a river is the safest point from where to cross the river. Anyway a visit to sacred places is considered a Tirtha Yatra. Most of the important places of pilgrimage in India have been located along the banks of great rivers like Ganges, Narmada, Godavari, Kaveri, and Brahmaputra. Tirtha Yatra is not only the physical act of visiting holy places but implies mental and moral discipline. Hindus go on pilgrimages for the purification and redemption from sin as per mythological traditions. Some of the most important points of pilgrimage in India are Badrinath (Uttar Pradesh) in the north, Puri in the east, Rameshwaram in the sourth, and Dwaraka in the west. Any trip to the Himalayas is considered a pilgrimage since it is known as *Devalaya* or 'abode of Gods'. In the Himalayas the most important point of pilgrimage is Gangotri, the point at which the river Ganges starts. The Puranas are the indispensable sources of information about the sacred places of ancient India. Guruvayou temple and

Sabarimala in Kerala, Sri Venkateshwara Temple in Trupati, Kasi, Hardwar, Pandharpur in Maharashtra etc. can be considered important places of Hindu pilgrimage. The most important Hindu pilgrimage takes place during the Kumbha Mela Festival and the Maha Kumbha Mela Festival which occurs once in 12 years.

Tirumal (*the excellent black one*)

Creator god. Early Dravidian (Tamil). Thought to reside in trees and equating with Visnu. In later Hinduism used as an epithet of Visnu.

Trailokyavijaya (*lord of three worlds*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). Seen standing on the Hindu deities Mahesvara (Siva) and Gauri. Colour: blue. Attributes: arrow, bell, bow, club, hook, noose, prayer wheel, staff and sword. Also an alternative name for Acala.

Transcendental Meditation (TM)

TM was started by Maharshi Mahesh Yogi in 1956. It is essentially the Mantra Yoga which Maharshi revived and introduced to the world. TM promised a drugless, stressless state of mind with inner peace and knowledge. Many of TM's meditation techniques are guarded secrets. The procedure is very simple and straightforward. First go and meet the Maharshi or one of his selected instructors. The instructor (teacher) will ask you question about your health, feelings, education and marital status. After listening to your answers, the teacher will advise you to chant a special Mantra. As you may know, there are several Mantras, so you may be given a particular Mantra. As you may know, there are several Mantras, so you may be given a particular Mantra that will help you the most. After receiving the Mantra, you must mentally chant the Mantra for 20 minutes each morning and evening. As a result, your stress problems will vanish and you will be a better person according to the Maharshi. TM definitely has a lot of positive aspects. TM also received a lot of negative publicity.

Its 'secrect', and special attraction to it for celebrities make it look like a phony 'Celebrity Religion'. But as per the Maharshi, "TM is

not a religion, but a science.'' Whatever the critics may say, TM has saved many lives from spiritual decline.

I do not think even advocates of TM make such a claim. Maharshi Mahesh Yogi indeed revolutionised the shole' concept of meditation. He made it very simple and lovable by all. He indeed took meditation out of all religious dogmas and presented it to the orld on a silver platter but at the same time nobody can say that TM is the only right method of meditation. It that was the only method, Lord Krishna would not have resorted to 18 chapters and 700 verses of advice to Arjuna (his disciple explaining different methods of meditation and paths of God-realization. TM will suit some but for some it may not suit at all. For some, very rigid, ritualistic and highly ascetic Hare Krishna methods may suit well. For some Mr. J. Krishnamurti's intellectual methods of seeking truth may be the answer. Please also understand that some of the claims of TM have been questioned by many including Prabhupada (of Hare Krishna movement), J. Krishnamurti, etc. Mr. J. Krishnamurti has gone to the extent of saying that repetition of ''Om'' or even ''Coca Cola'' will have the same effect on the mind. Anyway my idea is not to belittle the great gift of Maharshi to the world. I just want to tell you that there are so many ways of right meditation.

Trayastrinsa (*the thirty-three*)

Collective name for the group of *deva* gods. Hindu (vedic). One of the many lists of deities in Hinduism, this one is contained in the *Rg Veda* and includes thirty-three names divided into three groups of eleven in each of the three worlds. Subsequently, the *devas* were separated into eight *vasus,* twelve adityas, eleven *rudras* and two *asvins.* In later Hinduism the number thirty-three is increased hyperboically to 330 million and *deva* refers to gods excluding the major triad of Brahma, Vishu and Siva.

Trikantakidevi *(goddess of three thoms*)

Goddess. Hindu. Of terrible appearance. Colour: part red, part black. Attributes: conch, two lamps, prayer wheel and teeth.

Trimurti

Collective title for the major triad. Hindu. A three-headed representation of Brahma, Visnu and Siva as one entity. Contested by some authers, who argue that Brahma, who is almost invariably represented with four head, would be included here with only one.

Tripura (*lady of the three cities*)

Mother goddess. Hindu and Jain. In Jainism regarded as one of the *astamataras.* In Hinduism the *Sakti* of Tripurantaka, an *ugra* (terrible) representation of the god Siva, slternatively a form of the goddess Parvati. The 'three cities' are the cities of gold, silver and iron, one in heaven, one in the air and one on earth, which Siva destroyed in the form as Tripurantaka. Tripura is depicted attended by vultures. Attributes: book, hook, noose and rosary.

Trita (*Aptya*)

God(dess). Hindu (Vedic). Known from the Rg Veda. An obscure form of Indua with strong water attributes. Also Aptya.

Trivikrama (*taking three steps*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). It may originally have been the name of a sun god, but is taken as the incarnation of Visnu which strides the world in three steps in his dwarfish manifestation, and is linked with the Hindu perception of the three parts of the world — heaven, air and earth. His *Sakti* is Santi. Normally depicted with the left leg raised. Attributes: arrow, bow, club, conch, knife, lotus, noose, plough, prayer wheel, staff and sword.

Truth — A Virtue

Hinduism states *Satyameva Jayate,* meaning 'Truth Alone triumphs'. Being truthful to oneself'' is one of the most important teachings of Hinduism. The greatest apostle of Truth in modern times is none other than Mahatma Gandhi. His autobiography ''My Experiments With Truth'' is just that. The greatest follower of Truth in ancient times was King Harishchandra. It is said that this great king gave up his kingdom, his wife and only son for upholding the Truth (his promise) to Sage Vishwamitra. *According to Narada Smriti, Truth is the best means of purification of the*

soul. It says that if telling a truth and a thousand horsesacrifices are put in the balance and weighed, it will be found that Truth weighs more. Truth according to Manu, is the best austerity a human being can perform and a man of truth attains the state of Godhead when living in the body. It is the lack of truth or uttering falsehood that makes our lives miserable. Whenever we lie, we are actually punishing ourselves for momentary gain of some object for which we pay dearly in future with a multitude of problems. It is a style on the part of many to tell lies and in their own mind they suffer with a guilty conscience.

Well, there is no such thing as that *you should always utter truth,* even to the extent of making others' lives miserable. For example, if you see a mother with a very ugly child, you don't have to say to her, "What an ugly child you have"! Here that truth is unnecessary. Instead if you say: "I pray to God to bless your child with health and happiness," you are telling another truth and you avoid unnecessarily hurting the feelings of the mother or you could avoid any comment at all. If you are a car salesman, tell the people the limitations of the car you are selling along with the good points of the car. By telling truth, you, as a salesman, will be able to sell a lot of cars as long as your cars have some positive points in them. If you cheat people in your profession, always believe that others can cheat you a thousand times in their professions also. For example, an auto-mechanic can give you back your car with brakes half done and that could result in a fatal accident. The baby-sitter who takes care of your infant can be inattentive and that could even result in the death of your infant. I admit that once in a while the truth will hurt momentarily but in the long run it will pay you well. For example, if you do not like the behaviour pattern of one of your friends, you are better off telling that thruth than trying to cover it up with lies and later suffer for that. So it is better on your part to tell truth and live by it even if that will result in your getting hurt once in a while.

Tvastar (*carpenter*)

Creator god. Hindu (Vedic). The 'divine builder' who fashions living creatures on earth. The Hindu equivalent of the Roman god

Vulcanus. An aditya or sun god and the father of Saranyu. Attributes: homajakalika (an uncertain fire device), ladle and two lotuses. Also Tastar; Tvashtri; Visvakarman.

U

Udadhikumar

Generic name of a god. Jain [India]. One of a group of dieties under the general title of bhvanavasi (dwelling in places). They have youthful appearance.

Ugracandika (*violent Canda*)

Distinct form of the goodess Durga. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of a group of *navadurgas,* the 'nine durgas'.

Ugratara (*violent Tara*).

Goddess. Hindu (Puranic). A terrible deity who carries a cup and a corpse upon her head.

Uma

A form of the goddess Parvati. Hindu (Puranic). Uma is identified as the consort of Chandrashekhara, a form of Siva which includes the moon amongst his attributes. The meaning of her name is unclear, but possible has maternal connotations. As Uma Maheshvara she fought with demons inluding Mahisha. Attributes: lotus, mirror, rosary and water-jar. See also Somaskanda.

Untouchables

When the Aryans settled on the banks of the Indus, Ganges the Brahmaputra, they were forced to divide their society into four distinct groups based on labour, for the somooth functioning of society. They were: 1. Brahmanas-priestly class to work in temples and study and propagate religion. 2. Kshatriyas - royal and fighter class to rule and defend society. 3. *Vaishyas - business class to see*

all commodities are properly distributes. 4 Shudras - to help all other classes in their respective duties. According to Manu, Brahma (God created Brahmanas from his face, Kshatriyas from his arms, Vaishyas from his thighs, and Shudras from his feet. The division of labour was a very good idea, but in course of time, it degenerated. Some say that a fifth division of people emerged in Hindu society is course of time, and these people were known as outcastes or untouchables. Another group of historians says that it was Shudras who became the untouchables in society. Mahatma Gandhi called the untouchables by the name Harijans (children of God) and fought for their emancipation. The Government of India abolished the practice of untouchability and today, Harijans are well taken care of in Government circles. Untouchability was a curse on Hinduism. It stood against all Hindu ideals and principles. It only helped conversions from Hinduism to other religions.

Upakesini

Minor god. Buddhist. An attendant of Arapacana.

Upapattivasita (*control of fitness*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of a group of *vasitas* personifying the disciplines of spiritual regeneration. Colour: mixed. Attribute: a creeper.

Upayaparamita (*perfecing success against enemies*)

Philosophical deity. Buddhist. Spiritual offfspring of Ratnasambhava. Colour: green. Attributes: Jewelled staff and staff on yellow lotus.

Upulvan (*like the blue lotus*)

Local god. Singhalese [Sri Lanka]. The most senior of the four great gods of the Singhalese pantheon. Identified with Visnu, according to one tradition this deity had the specific task to protecting the culture of Sri Lanka from Buddhism. Conversely he stood by Gautama Buddha against the Hindu Mara.

Usas

Goddess of the dawn. Hindu (Vedic). The daughter of Dyaus and,

according to some texts, the consort of the sun god Surya. An auspicious deity. Usas brings the dawn, heralding Surya, and drives away darkness. She is the all-seeing eye of the gods. In the Rg Veda she is depicted as a beautiful young virginal figure who rides in a hundred chariots. She sets all things in motion and can render strength and fame to her devotees. In addition to being perceived as a sky goddess, she is also drawn as a mother goddess in the guise of a cow. Epithets include 'mother of the gods' and 'mother of cows'. She is invoked to give the boon of cows'. She is invoked to give the boon of longevity, but a more mlignant aspect reveals her as a huntress who wastes human life. Usas sometimes enjoys a domestic worship as a guardian hearth goddess who drives away darkness and evil spirits. She disappears, however, from the later traditions of Hinduism.

Usnisa

God. Buddhist. A *dikpala* or guardian of the zenith direction. Also a collective term for a group of eight deities, including Usnisa, who are perceived as extensions of the *dhyanibuddhas.*

Note: the word describes, additionally, a type of curled hairstyle found in the characteristic iconography of *buddhas.* Colour: yellow. Attributes: jewel, lotus, prayer wheel and sowrd. Three-headed.

Usnisavijaya (*victorious*)

Primordial goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Form of Vairocana, widely worshipped in Tibet. Regarded as a female *bodhisattva* or *buddha*-designate, and a *dikpala* or guardian of the zenith direction. Also a deification of literature. One of a group of *dharanis.* Colour: white. Attributes: arrow, bow, image of the Buddha on a lotus leaf, jewel, noose, prayer wheel, staff and water-jar. Three-eyed, three-headed and with eight arms.

Uttarabhadrapada

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A moderate *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Uttaraphalguni

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A moderate naksatra; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

Uttarasadha

Minor goddess of fortune. Hindu (Epi and Puranic). A benevolent *naksatra*; daughter of Daksa and wife of Candra (Soma).

V

Vac (*speech*)

1. Goddess of the spoken word. Hindu (Vedic). In some texts she is a daughter of Daksa and consort of Kasyapa. Alternatively she is the daughter of Ambhrna. Also known by the epithet 'queen of the gods', Vac is the personification of the phenomenon of speech and oral communication. She gives the boon of hearing, speech and sight and she can lead a man to become a Brahman. She also personifies truth and sustains soma—the liquid essence of vision and immortality. She is said to have created the four Vedas, the basis of the earliest Hindu mythology. Though she takes a prominent place in the *Rg Veda*, Vac largely disappears from later Hindu traditions. She may have become syncretized with the goddess of wisdom, Sarasvati. She is generally depicted as an elegant womanly figure dressed in gold, but in the secondary capacity of a mother goddess she is also drawn as a cow. 2. God. Buddhist. An emanation of Amitabha and a varety of Manjusri.

Vadali

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Marici. Attributes: flower, needle, noose and staff.

Vagisvara (*lord of speech*)

God of of speech. Buddhist. The tutelary deity of Nepal. An emanation of all *dhyanibuddhas* (spiritual meditation *buddhas*) and a variety of Manjusri. Accompanied by a lion or seated upon a lion throne. Attribute: blue lotus.

Vahguru

Creator god. Sikh. Worshipped in the Golden Temple of Amritsar, in northern India. He has no icons.

Vaimanika

Generic title for a group of deities. Jain [India]. A class of gods said to be borne by, or living within, a flying palace, the *vimana*.

Vairocana (*coming from the sun*)

Origin Buddhist [India]. The first and oldest *dhyanibuddha* or meditation buddha.

Known period of worship circa 500 BC to present.

Synonyms Buddhaheruka.

Centre (s) of cult pan-Asiatic.

Art references metal and stone sculptures, paintings.

Literary sources Sadhanamala and Tantric ritual texts.

One of five mystic spiritual counterparts of a human *buddha* in Vajrayana Buddhism. A product of the Adibuddha who represents the branch of the cosmos concerned with bodily form. He originates from the white mantra syllable OM and lives in the zenith paradise. His icon is normally placed in the innermost part of a stupa or shrine. His Sakti of Vajradhatvisvari and he is normally accompanied by a lion or two dragons. Colour white. Attributes: three monkish robes and prayer wheel. He is also taken as a tutelary deity in Lamaism [Tibet] in which case his attributes include bell and prayer wheel. Emanations include chiefly Samantabhadra but also Cunda, Grahamatrka, Mahasahasrapramardani, Marici, Namasangiti, Sitatapatra-

Aparajita, Usnisavijaya and Vajravahi. See also Aksohya, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and Ratnasambhava.

Vairotya (*having an axe and a good*)

Goddess of learning. Jain [India]. One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Vaisnavi

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A *Sakti of Visnu*, also regarded as a form of Laksmi. In later Hinduism she became one of a group of *mataras* regarded as of evil intent. Also one of a group of eight *astamataras*. In another grouping one of nine *navasaktis* who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras*. Her vehicle is the hybrid beast Garuda. Attributes: child, club, conch, lotus and prayer wheel.

Vajracarcika

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya, she stands upon a corpse. Colour: red. Attributes: cup, image of Aksobhya on the crown, jewel, lotus, skull with noose, staff and sword. Three-eyed.

Vajradaka

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksobhya bearing one, three or four heads.

Vajradhara

God. Buddhist. (An epithet of the Adibuddha but also an allegory for the highest *buddha*. Known particularly from Nepal and Tibet. His *Sakti* is Prajnaparamita. Attributes: cup, hook, noose, regal ornaments and staff. Three-headed.

Vajradhatvisvari (*lady of the adamantine world*)

Goddess. Buddhist. The Sakti of Vairocana and also a variety of Marici. Attributes: many, including an image of Vairocana on the crown.

Vajragandhari

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Colour: blue or gold. Attributes; arrow, axe, bell, bow, hook, image of Amoghasiddhi, knife, noose, prayer wheel, staff, sword and trident.

Vajragarbha (*substance of a thunderbolt*)

God. Buddhist (Vajrayana). A *bobhisattva* or *buddha*-designate. Colour: blue. Attributes: blue lotus, book and staff.

Vajraghanta

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). A female *dikpala* or guardian of the northern direction. Colour: green or white Attributes : staff with bell.

Vajramrta (*immortal of the Vajra sect)*

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Amoghasiddhi. His vehicle is an animal of uncertain identity. colour: green. Attributes: bell, club, hook, prayer wheel, staff and sword.

Vajrapani

God. Buddhist [mainly Tibet]. An emanation of Aksobhya but also sometimes identified with Adibuddha. Generally though to reflect the second *dhyanibuddha* or spirtual meditation *buddha.* Sometimes depicted with a peacock. Alternatively considered to be a counterpart of the Hindu god Indra. Colour: dark blue or white. Attributes: noose, snake and staff. Also Acala-Vajrapani; Acarya-Vajrapani.

Vajrapasi

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). A female *dikpala* or guardian of the southern direction. Colour: yellow. Attributes: staff with noose.

Vajrasphota

Goddess. Buddhist. A female dikpala or guardian of the western direction. Attribute: staff.

Vajrasrnkhala (*personification*)

1. Minor goddess. Buddhist. One of the Mahayana deities said to be an emanation of Amoghasiddhi. Some texts describe her as the Sakti of Hevajira. Colour: green. Attributes: arrow, bow, cup, image of Amoghasiddhi on the crown, mane, noose skin and staff. Three-eyed and three-headed.

2. Goddess of learning. Jain. One of sixteen vidyadevi headed by the goddess Sarasvati.

Vajratara

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Considered to be an emanation of all the *dhyanibuddhas* or spiritual meditation buddhas. Also identified as a emanation of Ratnasambhava or a form of Bhrkuti. She stands upon a lotus. Colour: golden. Attributes: arrow, blue lotus, bow, conch, hook, images of the five dhyanibuddhas on the crown, noose and staff. Three-eyed.

Vajravarahi (*diamond sow*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana) and Lamaist [Tibet]. An emanation of Vairocana and sometimes identified as the *Sakti* of Hevajra. In Lamaism she accompanies Vajradaka. She is depicted treading on a man. Colour; red. attributes: principally club, image of Vairocana on the crown and knife, but with an assortment of other attibutes from time to time. Three-eyed and three-headed.

Vajravidarani (*tearing asunder*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). Attributes: arrows, banner, bow, hook, noose, shield, staff and sword. Five-headed.

Vajrayogini

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). She can sometimes be identified carrying her severed head in her hand. Colour: yellow. Attributes: club, cup, knife and staff. Three-eyed.

Vajrosnisa

God. Buddhist. Apparently connected with the guardian deities or dikpalas in the easterly direction. Colour: white. See also Padmantaka.

Valli

Goddess. Hindu. The second consort of Skanda, usually depicted standing to his right. In its original context the word Valli may mean 'earth'.

Vamana

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Ppic and Puranic). The fifth *avatara* of Visnu which appears as a dwarf, symbolizing the puny

state of mankind in the cosmos. According to legend, the god took the guise in order to trick Bali, a great-grandson of Hiranyakashipu (see Narasimha), whose prestige had begun to overshadow that of Indra. To restore a proper balance Vamana requested from Bali a plot of land three paces wide on which to meditate. Visnu returned to his proper stature and claimed heaven and earth in two steps. He declined to take the third which would have also claimed the underworld, but instead gave its rule to Bali. The dwarfish form bears two arms. Attributes: umbrella and water-pot.

Varaha (*boar*)

Incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The third *avatara* of Visnu, which appears as a boar. According to legend, he descends in this guise to the bottom of the primeval sea to rescue the earth, which has been removed there by a demon. He retrieves it in the shape of a girl. The *avatara* may be depicted in wholly animal form or as a human with a boar's head. Epithets include Adivaraha.

Varahi

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A *Sakti* who in later Hinduism becomes one of a group of *mataras* regarded as of evil intent. Also one of a group of eight *astamataras*. In another grouping. One of nine *navasaktis* who, in southern India, rank higher than the *saptamataras*. She sits upon a boar, buffalo or elephant. Attributes: boar's head, bow, club, cup, knife, noose, plough, sword and trident.

Varahmukhi (*having a boar's head*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Marici. Attributes: arrow, bow, flower and staff.

Varali

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant on Marici. Colour: white.

Attributes: flower, needle, noose and staff.

Varuna (*coverer*)

Origin Hindu (Vedic, Puranic and early Tamil) [India]. Major guardian deity.

Known period of worship circa 1700 BC until present.

Synonyms none.

Centre (s) of cult throughout India but as a rain god in the south.

Art references sculptures and reliefs in metal and stone.

Literary sources Rg Veda, etc.

Varuna is one of the major Vedic gods, concerned with the secure operation of the world's systems and of water. Lord of the *asura* class of deities. he is thought to equate with the Persian deity Ahura Mazda. In later times, a dikpala or guardian of the western direction. He is regarded also an *aditya* or sun god, the son of Kardama and consort of Gauri.

In southern India he is still worshipped during periods of drought, particularly in coastal regions where he is thought to live in trees.

In Vedic times his sacred animal was the ram. He rides upon a fish or sea monster, or in a chariot drawn by seven horses. Attributes: conch, lotus, patasol, sacred thread, snake noose, trident and water jar with jewels. Pot-bellied and four-headed.

Vasantadevi

Goddess of spring. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. Particularly known from Tibet, where she appears in the retinue of Sridevi. Her animal is a mule. Attributes: cup and sword.

Vasita (*willpower*)

Generic title for a gwoup of goddesses. Hindu. Twelve deities who personify the disciplines which result in spiritual regeneration.

Vasu (s) (*excellent*)

Generic title for a group of gods. Hindu (Vedic). Eight deities attendant on the Vedic weather god Indra, comprising day, dawn, fire, moon, pole star, sun, water and wind. Generally carrying a

rosary and with a Sakti.

Vasudeva

God. Hindu. The princely father of Krsna and Balarama. Consorts include Devaki, Rohini, etc.

Vasudhara (*treasurer*)

1. Feritility goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). The Sakti of Kuvera.

2. Goddess. Buddhist. A female bodhisattva or buddha-designate who is the *Sakti* of and a form of Aksobhya or Ratnasambha. Colour: yellow. Attributes: book, ear of rice, images of Aksobhya and Ratnasambhava on the crown, parasol, pearl and water-jar with jewels.

Vasumatisri (*beautiful with an excellent mind*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Vasudhara.

Vasusri (*beautiful one*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Vasudhara.

Vasya-tara (*the subjected Tara*)

Goddess. Buddhist (Mahayana). A emanation of Amoghasiddhi and considered to be indistinguishable from Arya-Tara. Colour: green. Attributes: blue lotus and image of Amoghasiddhi on the crown.

Vata

God of wind. Hindu (Vedic) and Persian [Iran]. The name appears in the Rg Veda as a deity of violent personality.

According to Asvestan tradition the god of victory, Verethragna, appeared to Zarathustra in the guise of Vata.

Vayu (1) (the wind)

Origin Hindu [India]. God of the winds.

Known period of worship circa 1700BC to present.

Centre (s) of cult none specific.

Art references sculptures and carvings in metal and stone.

Literary sources the Vedic texts, including *Rg Veda.*

One of the most important dities of the Vedas. In later Hinduism he evolves into a *dikpala* or guardian of the north-western quarter. He is also depicted in some texts as a chariot-driver for the god Agni. Colour: dark blue. Attributes: arrow, hook, prayer wheel, staff and water-jar.

Vayu (2)

God. Buddhist. A dikpala or guardian of the north-western quarter.

Vayukumara

God. Jain [India]. One of the groups under the general title of bhanavasi (dwelling in places). Of youthful appearance.

Venda

Creator god. Dravidian (Tamil) [southern India]. An ancient vegetation deity. Worshipped in villages on the plains, thought to live in trees and equated with Indra.

Venkata

Form of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). According to the *Aditya Purana,* Venkata is a deity of considerable importance in southern India. The name does not occur in the north. He is worshipped extensively by Hindust but particularly in the Tamil shrine of tirupati where there is argument that the deity depicted is Siva or Karttikeya. The image appears to carry attributes of Visnu on the left and Siva on the right. Also Venkatesa.

Vidyadevi

Generic title for a group of goddesses. Jain [India]. Sixteen deities led by Sarasvati who are associated with knowledge or learning.

Vidyesvara

Generic title for a group of deities. Hindu Eight liberated or emancipated 'beings' who are considered to be aspects of Siva.

Vidyraja

Tutelary god. Buddhist (Mahayana). One of several deities who are concerned with the implementation of the low.

Vidyujjvalakarili (*tongues of fire*)

Goddess. Buddhist. A twelve-headed form of Akajata who is said to have been formed in the Buddha's sweat. She is often depicted trampling the four Hindu deities Brahma, Indra, Siva and Visnu. Colour: blue or black. Attributes: many and varied.

Vidyuthkumara

God. Jain [India]. Belonging to one of the groups under the general title of bhvanavasi (dwelling in places). Of youthful appearance.

Vighnantaka (*remover of obstacles*)

God. Buddhist (Mahayana). An emanation of Aksohya who may equate with the Hindu god Ganesa. Colour: blue. He is also seen as a dikpala or guardian of the northerly direction, in which case his colour green. Attributes: cup, drum, Three-headed. Also Analarka.

Vijaya (*victory*)

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). An *ekadasarudra* (one of the eleven Rudra deities). Hiranyaksa is considered one of his incarnations. Attributes: club, knife, rosary and staff. Vijaya is also the name of the bow of Indra.

Vikalaratri (*twilight night*)

Minor goodess. Buddhist (Mahayana). An attendant of Buddhakapala.

Vimala (*stainless*)

Minor goddess. Buddhist (Vajrayana). One of several deified *bhumis* recognized as different spiritual sphers through which a disciple passes. Colour: white. Atributes: lotus and staff.

Vina

Goddess of music. Buddhist. The personification of a lute. Colour: yellow, Attribute: a lute.

Vindhya

Mountain god. Hindu. Personification of the hills forming the northern edge of the Deccan area of central India.

Virabhadra (great hero)

War god. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Considered to be a form of Siva, and occasionally of Visnu, Virabhadra acts as a martial aspect of Siva against the god Daksa, who according to some accounts abused Siva's wife Sati and drover her to angry suicide by self-immolation to avenge the slight. He is depicted bearing four arms. Attributes: arrow, bow, shield and sword. He sometimes wears a necklace of skulls. Three-eyed and three-headed.

Viraj

Primordial goddess. Hindu (Vedic). Identified as the active female creative principle in the Rg Veda.

Viraratri (*night of courage*)

Hindu. See Chinnamastaka.

Virudhaka (*sprouted*)

God. Buddhist. A dikpala or guardian of the southerly direction. Colour: blue or green. Attributes: skin from the head of an elephant and sword. Also identified as the head of a group of demons, the *kumbhandas.*

Virupakas (*misinformed eyes*)

1. God. Hindu. Epithet of Siva and one of the *ekadasarudras* or eleven Rudra deities. Attributes: axe, bell, club, cup, drum, hook, knife, lotus, prayer wheel, rosary, Sakti and sword. Three- headed.
2. God. Buddhist. A *dikpala* or guardian of the western direction. God of snakes. Colour: red. Attributes: jewel, snake and stupa or domed shrine.

Vishwakarma

According to Rig Veda, Vishwakarma is the divine architect of the whole universe. He is the personification of the creative power that welds heaven and earth together. He is the son of Brahma and is

the official architect of all the gods palaces. He is painted white, has a club in his right hand, wears a crown, a necklace of gold, rings on his wrists and holds tools in his left hand.

All the flying chariots of the gods, all their weapons are his creation. It was Vishwakarma who built the golden city of Lanka, over which King Ravan ruled. He built the city of Dwarka, the capital of Lord Krishna after the latter had left Mathura, it was again Vishwakarma who made the Agneyastra (the weapons throwing fairy flames) and it was he who revealed the Sthapatya Veda, or the science of mechanics and architecture. Mahabharat describes him as "The Lord of the arts, executor of a thousand handicrafts, the carpenter of the gods, the most eminent of artisans, the fashioner of all ornaments, on whose craft all menu subsist, and whom, a great and immortal god, they continuously worship".

According to legends his daughter Sanjana was married to Surya, the sun. As she was not able to endure the heat and light of the sun, Vishwakarma placed Surya upon his lathe and cut away an eighth part of his brightness. The fragments that fell on the earth due to this operation were used by Vishwakarma to form "the discuss of Vishnu, the trident of Shiv, the weapon of Kuvera, the god of wealth, the lance of Kartekeya, the god of war and the weapons of all other gods."

Vishwakarma is also reputed to have made the image of Jagannath and left it incomplete due to an interruption. He is the god whose blessings enabled Nal, the monkey, to build the bridge over sea for Lord Ram right from the coast in the south of India to Lanka of Ravan.

According to Satpath Brahman, Vishwakarma performed a Sarvmedha Yagya (a universal sacrifice) in which he offered up all creatures and ultimately himself too. This process of ending the universe also became the process of creating another new universe. In this way every sacrifice is also a repetition of that first creative act. This is a representation of the drama of the cyclic process of destruction and renewal of all cosmic life and matter.

He is the presiding deity of all craftsmen. The architects and also

the factory owners perform the worship of Vishwakarma when the sun enters the Bhadrapada constellation; this ceremony is performed in front of the implements of trade or a manufactring machine. The carpenter worships the chisel, the saw, etc., the weaver prays before the shuttle while the potter worships the wheel and so on. On this day an atmosphere of festivity is blended with the rituals of prayers. As an independent god, Vishwakarma is still worshipped in some parts of Bengal.

Visnu or Vishnu

Origin Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic) [India]. One of a triad of creator gods. *Known period of worship* possibly from circa 1700BC until the present day.

Synonyms appearing as ten major incarnations or avataras: Matsya, Kurma, Varcha, Narashima, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Krsna or Balarama, Buddha, and Kalki (n). Other epithets include Abjaja, Abjayoni, Adhoksaja, Anantasayana, Aniruddha.

Centre (s) of cult many sanctuaries throughout the sub-continent. *Art references* sculptures generally in bronze, but also in stone. Reliefs. Literary sources *Rg Veda*; Mahabharata and Ramayana epics; Puranic literature.

Visnu began, according to the Vedas, as a minor cosmic deity imagined striding the sky in three giant steps-rising, zenith and setting. He was never a solar god, but became briefly associated with the movements of the sun in the sky.

Visnu's prestige developed with the Epics and of the three deities making up the apex of the modern Hindu pantheon, he is the most widely wordhipped and pre-eminent (see also Brahma and Siva). The keeper of civilized morality and order. In the *Mahabharata,* he is partly identifed with Krsna. According to one Puranic legendary source, Visnu was created from the left side of the primordial creator force. The Puranas also provide complex classifications for various aspects of Visnu. His most frequent consort is the goddess of fortune, Laksmi, with whom he is often depicted standing or resting on a lotus. His sacred animal is Garuda.

Visnu is the preserver of the world. He rules real time, or history, and through the concept of *karma* he maintains a moral balance which he corrects occasionally in the guise of one of his incarnations. He is a chief adversary of Yama, the god of the dead, and has the power to repel death. He is also closely identified with sacred water or *nara*, his presence pervading the Ganges. He is believed to sleep for four months each year, resting on the serpent Sesa with a lotus sprouting from his navel, after which he is roused by a special rite.

The followers of Visnu are the Vaisnavas and are mainly in the north of India, though there exists a strong following amongst the Tamils in the south. The Vaisnava caste mark is a V-shaped sign identified with water which has a property of descending.

Visnu is depicted with many heads or with four heads, generally with four arms, typically holding a wide assortment of attributes including conch and prayer wheel. He may also carry a discus, which reflects a destructive aspect, a mace of authority and a lotus. Around his neck may be the sacred stone, the *kausrabha*, and typically he has an obvious shock of chest hair.

Vihnu

Hindu gods and goddesses are phenomenal, but in due course of time Vishnu, as God of all gods, acquired supremacy, which continues till date. He is the central and the major diety of the *trinity*, viz., Brahma, Vishnu and Shiv. Though technically amongst these three chiefs gods known as creator, preserver, and destroyer, Vishnu is the Preserver, for all practical purpose he is deemed to be all-powerful, allknowing and all-present.

The name Vishnu comes from the root *vish*, which means "to spread in all dirctions, to pervade". Hence Vishnu is Pervader. He is the inner centre, the core, the nucleus, the cohesive point through which everything exists. He swells in everything, owns everything and overcomes anything.

According to scriptures, old and not so old, Vishnu is known under innumerable names. Shankaracharya's commentary on the *Vishnu-Sahastra-nama* explains the meaning of a thousand names

of Vishnu.

At the dawn of Aryan of Aryan religion's formative stage, Vishnu is found to be a god amongst so many other gods. But his rise on the scale of worship and prayer is very rapid and already before the end of the Vedic time, he rises to the highest pedestal. The form and image of Vishnu as well as its significance is explanied in detail in Purans and several other minor Upanishads.

The two most common representations of Vishnu show him either sleeping over the waves of the ocean on the coils of the serpent-deity, named deity, named Shesh Nag, or standing on waves with four hands -each hand holding one of his four chief attributes.

About the four arms of Vishnu, Gopal-uttartapani Upanishad says:

"In my lower right hand, which represents the revolving or creative tendency, I hold the conch, symbol of the five elements.

"In the upper right hand, which represents the cohesive tendency I hold the discus, shining like an infant sun, symbol of the mind.

"In the upper left hand which represents the tendency towards dispersion and liberation, I hold the lotus, symbol of the causal power of illusion, from which the universe rises.

"In my lower left hand, which represents the notion of individual existence, is the mace, symbol of primeval knowledge."

The Conch (Shankh) named *Panchjanya* is the fountain that evolves the five elements, i.e., water, fire, air, earth and sky or space. When blown it produces a sound that is associated with primeval sound from which creation developed.

The Discus or wheel (*Chakra*) of Vishnu named *Sudershan.* It has six spokes and symbolises six-petaled lotus. It represents the limitless controlling all the six seasons and is the fearful seapon that cuts off the heads of all demons.

The Lotus of Vishnu is named *Padma.* It is the symbol of purity and represents the unfolding of creation. It is the truth (*Sathva*). The element from which emerge the rules of conduct (*Dharma*) and knowledge (*Jnana*).

The *Mace* (Gada) of Vishnu is named *Kaumodaki.* It represents the elemental force, from which all physical and mental powers are derived.

In some images where in place of Mace, the Bow, Arrows and Quiver are shown, the symbols represent as follows. The bow called *Sarnga* represents the ego, origin of sensorial perception which means that it is the symbol of the divine power of illusion (*Maya*), while the numerous Arrows of Vishnu are the senses, the fields of activity of the intellect and the Quiver is the store- house of actions.

The worshippers of Vishnu, known as Vaishnavs, recognise in him the Supreme Being, out of whom emerge Brahma, the active creator; Vishnu himself the preserver; and Shiv or Rudra, the destructor.

Vishnu's preserving, restoring and protecting powers have been manifested to the world in a variety of forms, called 'Avatars', in which one or more portions of his divine attributes were embodied in the shape of a human being or an animal or a human- animal combined form, possessing great and sometimes supernatural powers. All these Avtars of Vishnu appeared in the world either to correct some great evil or to effect some great good on the earth. These incarnations are ten in number, though Bhagvata Purana increases them to twenty two and adds further that they are innumerable.

However out of the ten universally recognised incarnations, nine are said to have appeared in the world while the tenth is yet to descend here.

The first of these is *Matsya* (fish) incarnation. According to Hindu mythology the universe is subject to a cycle of periodical destruction and thereafter new creation. Before the latest creation of the present universe, the four Vedas (the holy books from the mouth of the Supreme-Deity) remained drowned in the waters. It was necessary to get hold of them to instruct Brahma about the work of creation. Vishnu was therefore appointed to bring up the Vedas from the deep. He took the form of a fish (*Matsya*),

descended into the waters and brought-up these sacred books.

This second is *Kachyup or Kurma* (tortoise) incarnation. In this Vishnu assumed the form of a tortoise and took the newly created earth upon his back in order to render this trembling globe a stability. The belief is held that this hour the earth is supported on the back of this tortoise.

The third incarnation is that of *Varah* (boar). In periodical destructions of the world, once the earth sunk into the deep waters, Vishnu, the great preserver, taking the form of a boar descended into the waters and drew up the earth with the help of his tusks.

The fourth incarnation is that of *Narsingh* (half-loin half-man combine). This special form was adopted by Vishnu to kill a demoniac ruler, named Hiranyakashyapu, who had pleased the god Brahma by his religious sacrifices. Lord Brahma had given him the blessings that no known man or animal born in the natural process could kill him, that he could could not die either in the day or in the night, on the earth or in heavens, either by fire, by water or by any weapon. It was to kill such a tyrant and to remove him from the earth that Vishnu assumed the form of Narsingh, which was neither man nor animal; came out of a broken pillar, laid hold of the demon-king by its teeth, put him up on his thighs and tore him up in the middle by his claws. It was evening time-neither day nor night. This incarnation demands separate treatment in some detail because Narsingh is still worshipped as a full fledged deity in many parts of India.

The fifith incarnation is that of *Vaman* (the dwarf). The fourth lineal descendant of Hiranyakashyapu, named Bali, through his devotion and penances defeated Indra, the god of the firmament, humbled other gods and extended his authority over the three worlds. All the gods appealed to Vishnu for protection and he became manifest in his Dwarf Avtar of Vaman for the purpose of restraining Bali. Once when this King was making a great religious sacrifice, Vishnu in the form of Vaman appeared before him for gifts in the company of other Barahmans. Bali was extremely pleased to see a holy may with so diminutive form and promised to give him whatever he should ask. Vishnu asked only for as much

land as he could measure by three steps. Bali laughingly agreed to grant the boon of three steps. Vishnu as dwarf stepped over heaven in first stride and then on earth in second stride. Then out of respect to Bali's kindness and his grandfather Prahlad's great virtues, Vishnu stopped short and left to him Patal, the subteranian region. Bali's capital was Mahabalipuram.

The sixth incarnation is that of *Parsuram*. Parsu is the name of an axe-like weapon adopted by this incarnation. This incarnation was as a Brahman, who manifested himself at the close of the satyayug (the first great millenium of Hindu mythological time calculus). This appearance was for the purpose of representing the tyranny of the power-drunk Kshatriya-caste. This sixth Avatar of Vishnu appeared in the world before Ram, the seventh Avatar, but they are both represented to living at the same time.

When the Kshatriya Kings of the earth and their ministers became very corrupt and committed all sorts of sins, the goddess Prithvi (Mother-Earth) went to Vishnu and prayed for relief. Her petition was accepted and Vishnu appeared on the earth as a descendant of great sage Bhrigoo. To avenge the gruesome murder of his father by a Kshatriya King and the great oppression perpetrated by rulers he is said to have cleared the earth of the Kshatriyas twenty one times and filled with their blood five large lakes. He is said to be instrumental in colonising much of Southern India, where so many shrines are dedicated to him.

The seventh and eighth Avatars of Vishnu are those of most famous heroes fo mythology, *Ram and Krishna*. Ram was the son of Dashrath, king of Ayodhya, who appeared to destroy the arch-demon Ravana, while Krishna, deemed to be the most perfect Avatar of Vishnu, came to the world to kill evil doers and to establish the rule of righteousness. These two incarnations are the best known and most popular gods amongst the Hindus everywhere and have been dealt with elewhere independently.

The ninth Avatar is that of *Balram*, also known as Bala-bhadra or Bala-deva, the elder brother of Krishna The story in Mahabharat narrates that Vishnu took two hairs, a white and a black one, and that these became Balram and Krishna, the two children of Devaki.

He was so powerful that he, single-handedly, at a very tender age killed the great demon, Asur Dhenuka, who had the form of an ass. Another demon tried to carry off Balram on his shoulders but the young boy beat out the demon's brain with his fists. When Krishna went to Mathura, Balram accompanied him and manfully supported him till Kans was killed by his younger brother. He also taught both Duryodhan and Bhim the use of the mace. His chief weapon is ploughshare (*hal*) and he is therefore named Haldhar too.

Those who hold the view that Balram is not the incarnation of Vishnu but of the great serpent Sesha on whom Vishnu reclines, claim that the ninth Avatar of Vishnu is Buddha. In this case the phenomenal success of Buddha as a religious teacher seems to have persuaded the Brahmins to adopt him as one member of their own pantheon of gods.

The tenth and the last incarnation of Vishnu that is yet to appear in the world at the end of the Kalyug or the Machine Age is that of *Kalki.* This Avatar shall appear seated on a white horse with a drawn sword blazing like a comet. He shall come to finally destroy the wicked, to restart the new creation and to restore the purity of conduct in people's lives.

All the above incarnations are only the earthly manifestation of Vishnu, who himself is eternal, unchangeable and immutable. He is blue-skinned and in all pictures, images and reliefs he is seen in rich ornaments and regal garments. His wife is Lakshmi or Sri, the goddess of wealth and fortune. His place of abode is Vaikuntha (heaven) and his vehicle is Caruda, a giant-sized eagle which often is shown as a winged human-shaped figure having a break-like nose. Vishnu is the infinite ocean from which the world emerges. Hence his symbol is water (*Nara*) and he himself is called 'Narayan'—the one who dwells upon the waters. He is pictured with the many-headed snake, as mentioned above, and this denotes Anant Nag (the timeless or ageless snake). From his navel grows the lotus out of which appears Brahma, the god who created the universe.

Such is the Supreme God Vishnu, the all-pervading divinity, who

descends as an Avatar (incarnation) to establish the rule of law and order of justice in each important age of the world's history.

Visnu Trivikrama

Form of the god Visnu. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). Trivikrama is the transformation into a giant from Visnu's dwarf *avatara* Vamana, in order to confirm his dominance over the world by covering it in three huge strides.

Visvakarman (*architect of the universe*)

Poorly defined creator god. Hindu (Vedic). Similar to Dyaus Pitar, he is described as the artist of the gods who may be linked or identified with Tvastar. He evolved, as the son of Prabhasa and Yogasiddha, into an occasional consort of the mother goddess Sarasvati.

Visvamitra

Minor god. Hindu (Puranic). According to legend, the father of the god Narada.

Visvarupa

Lesser known incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu. In Vedic literature he is identified as the son of Tvastar. Visnu took the *avatara* at the request of Arjuna. His animal is Garuda. Attributes: many Also Viratapurusa.

Visvosnisa

God. Buddhist. An *usnisa* apparently connected with the guardian deities or dikpalas in the southerly direction. Colour: green.

Vitthali

God. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). A lesser known incarnation of the god Visnu (or Krsna). The cult of Vitthali is centred mainly on Panharpur, near Bombay, where he is the object of devotion by the Varkari sect. Generally depicted standing on a brick, wearing a fez-like hat and with hands on hips. Also Vithoba; Panduranga.

Vivasvan (*shining*)

Sun god. Hindu (Vedic and Puranic). The original Vedic list of six

descendants of the goddess Aditi or *adityas,* all of whom take the role of sun gods was, in later times, enlarged to twelve, including Vivasvan. One of his titles is the 'embodiment of ancestral law'. His consort is Saranyu and he is identified as the father of Yama and Yami, as well as Manu and the Asvins. Colour: golden. Attributes: forest garland, two lotuses and trident. Also Vivasvat.

Vrtra

Demonic god of chaos, Hindu (vedic). A primordial being who existed before the formation of the cosmos and who was slain by the mother goddess Sarasvati.

Vyasa

Minor incarnation of the god Visnu. Hindu (Vedic, Epic and Puranic), Vyasa is said to be the author of the Vedas, the Mahabharata epic and the Puranas. He ranks with Hyagriva and Sarasvati as a lord of knowledge and wisdom, and is responsible for dividing the Tree of Knowlege into parts. In the texts he is depicted as dark-skinned and accompanied by four students, Cumanta, Pail, Vaisampayana and Jaimini. He may be bearded. Also *Vedavyasa.*

W

Wrong with Hinduism

There is nothing wrong with Hinduism at all. Some people misunderstand the essence of Hinduism and that creates problems and misery among people.

1. For example, some run away from their duties and call themselves Sannyasins or Sadhus and lead beggars' lives. The Gita specifically states that no one will reach the state of inaction (Nishkarmata) by shunning duties because man by nature does actions all the time. It is also wrong to believe that Hinduism can be understood only if clothed in Kavi robe and never in a three-piece suit.

2. Karma and Fate are the two most misused words among the Hindus. Some refuse to use their free will at all and lead the lives of earthworms under the guise of total surrender to God. By not using their free will, they become victims of their emotions and the whole country pays for their laziness.

3. Doing wrong actions and then bringing in scriptures to support them is another mistake some do.

4. Some among the younger generation of Hindus look at Hinduism as a taboo anly to be touched when they hit 60. They perceive Hinduism as being full of dogmas without even reading one line from the Vedas and the Upanishads.

5. Some mix up mythology, Vedic and Upanishadic teachings. That creates unnecessary arguments about scriptures. Arguing on mythological stories is the most stupid act of all.

Y

Yajna (*sacrifice*)

God. Hindu. A minor *avatara* of Visnu and embodiment of the Brahmanic ritual.

Yaksas

Tree spirits. Hindu. Generic tile for animistic beings mentioned circa fifth century BC by Panini.

Yama or Yam (*twin; alternatively the restrainer*)

1. God of death. Hindu (Vedic). The son of Vavasvan and Saranju, or of Surya and Sanjna, his consort is Dhumorna or Yami. Yama is also the judge of the dead and the Twin sibling of Yami, goddess of death. When Krsna is perceived as the embodiment of the cosmos, his eye-teeth are Yama. He evolved into a dikpala or guardian of the the southerly direction. His animal is a black buffalo. Colour: black.

2. Guardian deity. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. One of a group of *dharmapala* with terrible appearance and royal attire Who guard the Dalai Lama. He stands upon a man. Colour: red, blue, white or yellow. Attributes: most commonly a noose and staff, but also club, net, shield, sword, trident and two tusks.

Yam is the god of death and is the lord of the infernal regions visited by man after cessation of life. He is the embodiment of the rule of law and imparts justice according to deeds. The word 'Yam' means the restrainer, it is he who keeps the mankind in check

Yam's mount is a fierce-looking black buffalo, a form which he

also adopts for himself on occasions. He has got a rope noose in one hand, by which he is supposed to eatch a hold of his victims and a mace in the other which represents the weapon of punishment.

He decides what are the actions of the living beings that bear or do not bear fruits, when his messengers drag the dead before his throne. In Vedas Yam is the first Ancestor and has the full distonction of a god. He is shown as having a fearful and grim appearance and he wears a glitterin crown upon his head.

Yam is the son of Vivasat, the embodiment of social morality, while his mother is Saranyu (clouds), who is the daughter of Vishakarma, the cosmic architect. Yam's twin sister is Yami, who has the greatest affection for her brother. Yami later appeared on this earth as the river Yamuna.

As being the judge of the dead, he is said to hold a court, in which he is the presiding officer. He has another small god to assist him, who is called Chitragupta. Chitragupta is supposed to keep an account of the actions of men. If the actions of the deceased in his life time have been wicked, he is sent to suffer in a particular part of hell, while a man with noble deeds is sent to a part of heaven.

Yam is regent of the south quarter and as such is called Dakshinasapati. His abode is named as Yamalya on the south side of the earth and has an intersting leged around it. This account is taken from the Mahabharat. The narration is that after Brahma had created the three worlds, viz., earth, heaven and *Patal* (the subterranean region), he recollected that a place for judgement and punishment of the wicked was wanting. He therefore asked the architect Vishwakarma to prepare a suitable place for this purpose. Vishwakarma prepared a magnificent palace and opposite its sourth door he created four pits to punish the wicked. Three other doors were reserved for the entrance of the good so that they might not see the place of punishment when they went to be judged. Brahma named this palace Sanjeevani. Brahma ordered the architect to form a vast trench around it and fill it with water, which came to be called Vaitarnee. Brahma next ordered Agni (the fire god) to enter this river so that the water might boil. After the death each person is obliged to swim across this Vaitarnee river, which gives

harmless passage to good souls but the evil ones have to suffer torments and pangs while crossing this river's boiling water.

This legendary place of heaven created for Yam by Vishwakarma is 800 miles in circumference. At this place there is no fear of enemies and sorrow of mind and body is non-existent. The climate is mild and salubrious and each one is rewarded in Kind according to his deeds. He who has given much in charity receives very many comforts of all kinds.

To the virtuous and to the sinner Yam appears in different forms. To the virtuous he appears to be "like Vishnu. He has four arms, a dark complexion and lotus-like eyes. His face is charming and he wears a resplendent smile. In the case of the wicked, he is seen with "limbs appearing three hundred leagues long. His eyes are deep wells. His lips are thin, the colour of smoke, fierce. He roars like the ocean of destruction. His hairs are gigantic reeds, his crown a burning flame. The breath from his wide nostrils blows off the forest fires. He has long teeth. His nails are like winnowing baskets. Stick in hand, clad in skins, he has a frowning brow."

Yam has three wives, called Hema Mala (Golden Garland), Shushila (Good natured one), and Vijya (Victory). Yam has two ferocious dogs, who were born to Sarama (The Fleet-One), which is the bitch that guards the herds of Indra. These two dogs have four eyes each and very wide nostrils. They guard the road to Yam's abode and which the departed are advised to hurry past with all possible speed. These dogs are said to wander about among men as his messengers.

Numerous stories about Yam are scattered in religious books and specially Purans abound in them. One that shows Yam in a different light and is known to every Hindu is inserted here just to show that Yam is not without compassion. This is the story of Savitri Satyavan. This story from Mahabharat has stirred popular imagination since centuries. It relates to a noble princess who remains faithful to her husband unto death and even beyond it.

The name of this beautiful princess was Savitri. Once she met in the woods a beautiful young man, named Satyavan, son of an

exiled and blind king who had been living in a hut like a hermit. She fell in love with this sxiled prince and wanted to marry him. The astrologers of her father's court warned that Satyavan was destined to die within one year. But the princess was adamant and married him.

On the fixed day Yam, the god of death, himself came on the buffalo and took the soul of Satyavan. Savitri, his wife, did not beg for his soul. She was very learned and just recited the beautiful and relevant passages concerning this god from the holy scriptures. Yam was pleased and asked Savitri to have any boon except her husband's life. Savitri requested god Yam to give back eyesight to Satyavan's father. She still continued her prayers and god agreed to grant another favour. Savitri asked Yam to give back to her father-in-law the kingdom he had lost. This favour was also granted. Yam went away holding Satyavan's soul; Savitri too followed him. Yam agreed to great her the third favour. Savitri replied, 'I wish to give birth to hundred sons'. Yam went away holding Satyavan's soul; Savitri too followed him. Yam, in a hurry, promised this boon without giving a second thought to its implications. Savitri immediately said, "But how can I give birth to them without my husband?" Yam was caught unawares and he could no go back of his promise. He had to grant this boon also to her.

Many other such legends are related concerning this god though the wide-spread image of this deity is that of a feraul rod- bearer bent on punishing for deeds or misdeeds committed during life.

Yamaduti

Messenger goddess. Buddhist (Mahyana). an attendant of Yama. Her vehicle is buffalo. Colour: blue.

Attributes: cup, fly whisk, knife and lotus.

Yamantaka (*destroyer of Yama*)

Guardian deity. Buddhist-Lamaist [Tibet]. A emanation of Aksobhya and one of a group of *dharmapala* with terrible appearance and royal attire who guard the Dalai Lama. By tradition

he stifled the great rage of Yama. His *Sakti* is Vidyadhara. He is also a *dikpala* or guardian of the easterly direction. He tramples a number of creatures including a man, and possess thirty-two arms and sixteen legs. Colour: red, blue, black or white. Attributes: many.

Yamari (*enemy of Yama*)

God. Buddhist (Vajrayana). Probably influenced by the Hindu deities Siva and Yama. His vehicle is a buffalo. Colour: red. Attributes: club, cup, noons and staff.

Yami

Mother goddess. Hindu (Epic and Puranic). One of seven *Saktis* who in later Hinduism became regarded as of evil intent. Also Camunda.

Yamuna

Minor river goddess. Hindu. A daughter of Surya and Sanjna and the sister of Yama. She is described in Puranic texts and associated with the river Yamuna on which lies the city of Mathura. Colour: blue.

Yoga Vasistha

It is one of the most important works in the Hindu philosophy. All aspects of Darshanas (Hindu philosophies), right from Samkhya to Vedanta are intricately woven into the Yoga Vasistha. The principal figures in this book are Lord Rama and sage Vasistha. Just like the Bhagavad Gita, this is a dialogue between sage Vasistha and Lord Rama. Sage Vasistha advises Rama on all aspects of life.

Yoga Vasistha contains 29,000 verses. Since this book emerged from the epic Ramayana, it is believed that sage Valmiki wrote this book also. Sage Vasistha is an important figure in Hinduism. Manu refers to Vasistha as one of the exponents of Hinduism. Adi Sankaracharya refers to him as the first sage of the Vedanta school. It is believed that this book was written during the 7th century A.D.

One of the most important parts of the Yoga Vasistha is the doctrine of mind. According to this book when the mind vibrates, the world comes to existence, and when the mind stops vibrating, the world is destroyed.

The language and style of the Yoga Vasistha is very poetic. It is filled with fantastic stories and very philosophical discourses. Sage Valmiki ends Yoga Vasistha with a statement that, he who listens to the dialogue between sage Vasistha and Lord Rama will be liberated and will attain knowledge of the Brahman.

Yogesvari

Mother goddess. Buddhist (Epic and Puranic). Personifying desire and listed among both the *saptamataras* and the *astmataras.* Attributes; bell, club, drum, shield, sword and trident.

Suresh Chandra is a seasoned researcher in Hinduism. He did his M.A. in History from Patna University. He served in various leading news papers.

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